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THE CATHEDRAL, ORVIETO

SOME UMBRIAN CITIES

BY ADA·M·HARRISON
& R·S·AUSTIN

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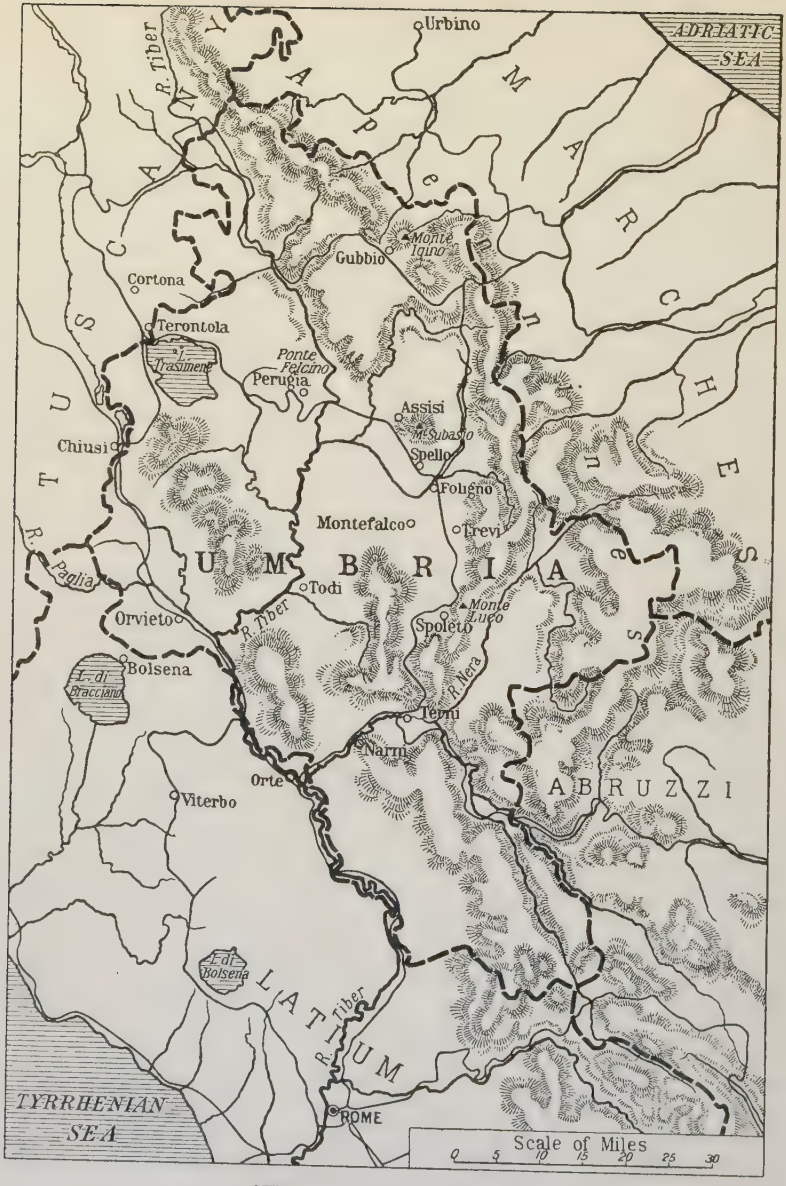


SKETCH-MAP OF UMBRIA.

SOME UMBRIAN CITIES

CHAPTER I

CITIES OF UMBRIA

That Umbria is not a country of cities, in any practical or contemporary understanding of the word, is made unmistakably plain by the attitude of the railway towards it. From Florence to Rome the express races in a twentieth-century fury southward, but at Terontola, marking about a third of the way, the pilgrim to Umbria is ejected, and thence by jolting and incredibly deliberate stages, he penetrates into the heart of that green land. Broached from the other end the experience is identical; for from Terni to Foligno, just as from Terontola to Foligno, the wide plain is traversed by one of those obstinately branch lines that there is no mortal hope of hurrying.

Yet perhaps it is as well that the train goes slowly, for this initial act of penetration is a kind of prologue to the adventure—an introduction that serves as a fair and characteristic specimen of the whole. Umbria is at once declared in the moody and uncertain pace with which one struggles away

from the junction, but it is declared no less in the scenery and the atmosphere that immediately unfolds about the journey like a spell. Almost at once the train slides out beside Lake Trasimene, infinitely wide and pale and still, of a delicate, transparent and yet intense blue colour that belongs to itself alone. It lies like an inland sea, half-circled by mountains, its flat edge, which the train almost brushes, utterly level and shallow and shut in by reeds. It seems at once exquisite, mysterious, and a little sinister, as wide and brooding stretches of water are apt to be; and in the midst of the silvery loveliness one thinks involuntarily of the Roman legions caught in ambush by Hannibal among these hills and hacked and driven by hundreds into the lake so that their wounds turned its shallow margin red.

Hardly within its borders, one is yet drawn by this blue and silvery and infinitely delicate landscape into the heart of Umbria, and the green of the fields that follows, the misty and atmospheric tinge that underlies the colours of all seasons, is, like it, truly characteristic and invariable. At last towards Perugia there grows into sight a cluster of grey houses on the edge of the hills, remote, medieval, deserted and romantic; and this, in appearance at least, is the pattern of all Umbrian cities, which, with the exception of Perugia itself, are no cities,

in that they do not reflect and have contact with their own generation, but with those of the past.

Perhaps it is that Umbria, lying in the centre and heart of the peninsula, has borne so many occupations and metamorphoses, that she has no vitality left for the latest one, and is content to be passed by. Or it may be that her character being entirely green and pastoral and ill-adapted to the industrialism that is synonymous with an active part in modern life, she has no alternative but to remain a little out of the world. Conforming to the different standards, however, of earlier times, she was once eagerly in it, and played a very important part in Italian affairs. Naturally she was completely Roman in Roman days, but before that she bore, with Tuscany, the brunt of the Etruscan invasion, and accepted that civilisation on top of what she already had native of her own. Etruria was submerged as a power in the advance of Rome, but she was by no means wiped from the page of history; and now, when one scratches the surface of Umbria, it is as often Etruscan as Roman relics that are laid bare. A curious fascination attaches to them, partly because of their beauty and interest, and partly because of the mystery that still surrounds those invaders whose traces they are. Ancient Rome is a wonder to the traveller, but one domesticised by schooldays

and in a measure explicable by reference to books; whereas ancient Etruria is a wonder to a large extent still unfathomed and unexplained.

It appears that the Etruscans came very early from the east, perhaps about 1000 B.C., and planted themselves in Central Italy, dispossessing the native Umbrians of such sites as appealed to them —notably of certain strong, commanding hilltops —and apparently leaving them unmolested in other places. All that is known of the Etruscans is gathered from what remains of their architecture and their tombs and a few scattered references to them in Roman literature, for their writing has not been read, so that what records they left of themselves in the way of inscriptions are still inaccessible.

Even from such data as we have it is evident that the Etruscan was no precarious and fugitive civilisation or settlement. The remnants of their building, though scanty, are magnificent; the walls of their hilltop fortresses, such as can be seen at Volterra, Cortona, Fiesole and Perugia, and the masonry of their tombs show that they, like the Egyptians, had an idea of building for eternity, and never spared their labour. Though in defences for the living and the dead they doubtless embodied their best ideas of permanence, their arts as well as their architecture suggest that they

were sincere and serious workmen, with a strain of primitiveness surviving in their knowledge and their skill, which probably saved them from slipshod and sophisticated methods. Their characteristic material is huge rectangular blocks of stone laid one upon the other without mortar, recognisable time and again in the city walls of Umbria and Tuscany below the jumbled masonry of succeeding generations.

Their fortress-walls and the inaccessible sites of their cities prove them to have been intrepid builders and engineers. Everything else that is known about them—their habits, their art, their religion and their appearance—is gathered from the study of their tombs; for, like many ancient peoples, they laid away with their dead, for their enjoyment in the afterworld, a representative collection of what they had used in life—weapons, armour, playthings, jewellery and household goods; and they were also adepts at memorial portraiture. From the effigies on coffins and on urns it appears that the true Etruscan type of face was distinctly Oriental in character, with flattish features, and as often as not characterised by a faint and highly enigmatic smile. They were probably not very handsome—the Romans certainly seem to have been poorly impressed with their looks, though they were enemies and could not be considered impartial—but

they were at any rate highly civilised and possessed of remarkably good taste. Examples of almost every common ornament and utensil have been found in their tombs, and the great majority of them are models of utility and elegance. Etruscan museums all over Italy are filled with their work in all materials, particularly in terra-cotta and in bronze, which were in the commonest use. Some of their vases are copied from the Greek, and are usually rather cumbersome essays in the familiar mixture of red and black; but their own native pottery, either all red or all black, is unfailingly pleasing. There is hardly a specimen among the cups, dishes, lamps, vases and various pots that is not of graceful and sensible shape. Even the figurines in clay, turned out in thousands like religious images to-day, have something artistic and charming about them. In bronze they made weapons and armour, sometimes in sheets and sometimes in very thin beaten plates fastened together, and mirrors and ornaments covered with elaborate and beautiful engraving, lamps and vessels, and every conceivable variety of useful and ornamental pins. They also worked with extraordinary delicacy in gold, and have left some beautiful jewellery and fine specimens of glass, gracefully coloured and moulded. Greek influence pervades all their art in its later stages, but they seem to have been over-

come by the Romans before any painful decadence could set in.

The Etruscan religion was probably the basis of the Roman, and many of the Roman rites belonged to the earlier civilisation. Divination by the flight of birds was one of them, and the fact that it was used in the legendary founding of Rome itself has led some scholars to think that it was actually the Etruscans who established the first settlement by the Tiber and provided it with its famous seven Kings. So that when Tarquin, the last of them, was expelled by the Latins, in going for help to Lars Porsena of Clusium, who was certainly an Etruscan, he was merely appealing to his own people. Even long after their conquest by Rome the Etruscans were looked upon as authorities on all matters of religion, and young Romans were sent to them for instruction and initiation. The learned Emperor Claudius, in his late day, wrote a book about their religious practices and observances, which, if it had not perished, might have illumined a lot of difficult conjecture. But the key to their impenetrable writing, unexplained except that it reads from right to left, looks rather like Greek capitals and has very few vowels, would be a still more practical blessing.

How much Etruria gave to civilisation is not certain. Strong partisans of the older race, robbing

their conquerors to pay them, declare that they taught the Romans not only religion, but practically everything that they knew about engineering, road-making, drainage, their system of heating by hot-air pipes, and much of the science of building, including the construction of the theatre. If the debt of Rome to Etruria is not precisely calculable, it is certainly great.

For some time, while Rome was establishing herself in Latium, the two civilisations marched side by side. But once Rome began to feel the strength of her fighting spirit and the need to expand, it was plain that Etruria was the first obstacle that must be cleared out of her path. It was not a sudden conquest, for Rome was young and small and the Etrurians powerful and numerous and obstinately entrenched in their fortresses; but bit by bit they were beaten down, and finally, towards the end of the fourth century B.C., Rome made a victorious peace with the twelve capitals of the Etruscan League. Volterra, on her bleak Tuscan hilltop, held out until 270 B.C., but when she at last fell, Etruscan history was virtually at an end. The new power swept over the old, doing its best to submerge and extinguish it, but that it was not completely successful the splendid scattered remnants of Etruria to-day bear witness.

Having passed out of its first historical stage

THE ETRUSCAN ARCH, PERUGIA

the occupation of the Etruscans, Umbria, together with the rest of Italy, was merged into Rome, and her cities, becoming allies, enjoyed the advantages of connection with the capital. Very early they established a record of loyalty, for when Hannibal, after his victory at Lake Trasimene, made no doubt of winning them to his side and so strengthening his position against the Romans, they pluckily stood up to him and turned him back near Spoleto, and so wrote an important page in the history of the Republic. In the decline of the Empire, the Umbrian cities suffered annihilation with the rest at the hands of the barbarian invaders, and there followed for them, as for everyone, the so-called Dark Ages, from which, with the exception of a few stray names—the names of Popes and an occasional saint or scholar—so little has emerged to be added to the tale of history.

When light next breaks in Italy it is upon the question of the Guelf and Ghibelline wars, which began obscurely in a German province, but gradually in the peninsula assumed the character of a permanent rivalry between the Emperor and the Church, in which the Pope represented the Guelf and the Emperor the Ghibelline cause. The next stage in Italian history is the rise of the communes, during which, by degrees, such cities as were not ruled directly by the Pope or could throw off the

Emperor's or whatever yoke was on them, asserted their own independence and a right to rule themselves. This is the beginning of the romantic, glorious and exhaustively explored period of Italian history, when individualism, with all its attendant goods and evils, was carried to its highest pitch. Naturally all the cities were not completely isolated. They still declared themselves, either voluntarily or by coercion, Guelf or Ghibelline, and they still supported the cause of the Emperor or the Pope. But each city developed its own laws and institutions, which it administered and enjoyed as long as outside interference would let it.

As time went on, the Pope-and-Emperor significance of the Guelf and Ghibelline causes became weaker, but these were still the cries under which rival communes went to war and rival factions within communes waged their private quarrels. If the nature of the partisanship were decided early, and a city developed a generally Guelf or a generally Ghibelline complexion, some other theme of dissension would be imported into it, and there would be parties of People against Nobles, or, as in many of the cities in Tuscany, Blacks against Whites, or merely of one great family and its following against another. At the time of the greatest expansion and prosperity of the city states, within them some kind of internal feud was always furiously raging.

The tale of faction wars in cities is, in retrospect, a bloody and an awful one, and historians represent the early prosperity of the communes as planted upon a basis of the most chaotic disagreements of their parts. But it is most likely that partisanship in those days took the place of modern politics—which would also sound matters of feud and passion if they were recorded in a generation not familiar with them—and although parties most often carried the day at the sword's point rather than by the unknown virtue of the ballot-box, we are to-day in no position to describe their disagreements as nothing but senseless and barbarous civil scrimmages.

In time all these problems of factions within the cities tended to be resolved the same way. One party would become strong enough to establish a tyranny, which would be held either by a *condottiere*—one of those independent strong captains with bands of soldiers at his back—or by the head of the most powerful house, who would take precautions to establish the succession for his heirs. In this way the Medici would be installed at Florence, the Feltreschi at Urbino, and so on. The need for each tyrant to assure his position and make it safe for his posterity made this last stage the longest in the history of the communes, which, divided into upper dogs and under dogs, and in various stages of

success and disrepair, lasted roughly from the eleventh to the sixteenth century. Some then came to an end by being merged into the Papal states, and most began to suffer the vicissitudes of continually changing foreign domination, which filled such a chequered and protracted chapter of Italy's history. And now, after the long and late struggle of the Risorgimento, a united Italy, realised for the first time in history, takes her place among the European Powers.

All these stages of history are reflected successively in the histories of the Umbrian cities. They all have, of course, their individual and private stories, with different points of contact with the main stream—some having passed through every stage, some having started late, and still others having finished early—but they have a general heritage in this long, complicated and unrestful past. They have, too, their particular heritages, in the shape of their separate and distinct characters and personalities, which, built up as they were and jealously insisted upon through centuries of fierce individualism and independence, no amount of unity and amalgamation will ever destroy.

Of all the cities of Umbria, Perugia was and still is the biggest, strongest and most important. She has borne her part in every stage of history, and is still, in a sense, bearing it in the modern world.

Not, of course, that she is an industrial power or anything as lively or up to date as that—she is, after all, nothing like as big as a small English county town, and has left at least half of herself in the fourteenth century—but she is still alive and vigorous, and that is one of her chief charms. For the beauty of a city is that it should continue as a city, and not as an antique monument, which is a different spectacle and calls forth different emotions; and that a strain of unconscious humdrum life should flow on in it to-day, exactly as it did in the picturesque days we love to look back on with so much wonder and sentiment. There are enough dead cities in Italy, and especially in Umbria, to witness the truth of this. They have a beauty and a great interest, without doubt, but there is about them the sadness and unreality of objects fulfilling some purpose other than that for which they were designed. The haunts of ancient life have to be informed with modern life in order to enjoy their full meaning. An old house is only a house inasmuch as there are people still living in it —uninhabited it degenerates into a "sight," an "object of interest" or a ruin. This is a good lesson for many Italian enthusiasts, and particularly for those sentimentalists who deplore the existence of what they describe indefinitely as "modern Rome," without realising that if it were not for the

up-to-date people who pursue their modern and mechanical occupations in completely unarchæological buildings, St. Peter's, the Castle of St. Angelo, and even the Pantheon itself, would lose more than half their meaning.

So that even if Perugia is kept vigorous and significant only by such prosaic means as a chocolate factory and an army of tourists, these should both be accounted blessings for the vivifying work they do.

The history of Perugia is as long and romantic as that of any city in Italy, and during her existence as a commune, which was her strongest and most important period, it is probably as fierce and warlike as that of any half-dozen of them put together. For she bred not so much artists or merchants as fighters, and these were both her power and her fame. She is one of the oldest cities in Italy, and in her earliest days was one of the twelve capitals of the Etruscan League, falling to Rome with the rest in 310 B.C. In Roman times she gave her name to a war (*Bellum Perusinum*) between Cæsar's inheritors, Anthony and Octavius, and was ravaged by a great fire, started by one of her own citizens, when in 41 B.C. Anthony was expelled and the troops of Augustus came in victorious. The first Emperor, however, had no grudge against the city, and rebuilt it as *Augusta Perusia;* but hardly a trace of the

Romans has survived the barbarian invasions, although some substantial relics of Etruria, centuries older, were proof against all attempts at demolition. Part of the Etruscan city wall still stands, as well as that great gateway that remains one of the most important and probably the largest Etruscan monument in existence.

From her earliest life as a city commune, Perugia took to the habit of internal feud and violence with avidity. Out of the Guelf and Ghibelline struggles she had emerged Guelf (she belonged for a long time to the Papal states, and always displayed at least a strong nominal enthusiasm for the Pope), and proceeded to a fearful and protracted patrician-and-plebeian war, in which the two parties, called here Beccherini and Raspanti, took it in turns to occupy the city as victors and to skulk off worsted to their outlying strongholds and bide their time for another attack. Each party in turn provided the city with a lord and master, who was successful, while he lived, in keeping Perugia at peace. Biordo Michelotti of the Raspanti became tyrant towards the end of the fourteenth century, and was treacherously murdered soon afterwards by assassins introduced before him by a monk who came in the guise of a friendly messenger. Braccio Fortebraccio, the wise and beloved champion of the Beccherini, got possession

of Perugia in 1416, but he too was killed, in battle, before he could establish any peaceful or healing régime. Though not all her energy was spent in civil war. In spite of her domestic troubles, Perugia had by the end of the fourteenth century acquired the supremacy over almost all Umbria. She was known as tyrant and mistress there, and as one of the chiefs of the Guelf League, of which Florence and Siena were the other two. She seemed, in her powerful days, to possess an inexhaustible fighting energy, which she employed abroad to the greatest advantage.

At the same time, unable to leave any species of faction and rivalry unexplored, she had had her family feuds, which raged with peculiar violence between the houses of the Oddi and the Baglioni. In them the Baglioni came off best, and a tyrannical attempt by a certain Piccinino having been circumvented, they definitely got possession of the city. They held it for more than a century, and their rule is responsible for all the most picturesque and frantic legends and episodes that hang about the name of Perugia. Vipers were common at Milan, and various other kinds of beasts in the palaces of the other capitals, but for spectacular force nothing apparently has ever equalled the Baglioni. Historians, chiefly their own tame historian Matarazzo, have left a record of a tribe of

PIAGGIA DI PORTA S. PIETRO, ASSISI

men of godlike strength and beauty, who lorded it over Perugia and over the rest of Umbria by a kind of divine right to power and to licence. They appear to have practised almost fabulous exploits of bloodshed and cruelty and strength of arms, and their deeds make sometimes romantic and sometimes hideous reading, treachery and physical beauty remaining always on record as their outstanding characteristics.

Naturally the family, in its numerous ramifications, was intricately divided against itself, and finally, in 1500, by a conspiracy which has gone down to history as " the great betrayal," the whole of the ruling branch, with one exception, was disposed of. The deed was done on the night following the marriage feast of one of the young sons. When all the palace was asleep, worn out with festivities and excitements of the day, the signal was given, and the whole family except one was murdered in its beds. Even hardened Perugia was shaken by this butchery, and, following it, a kind of blank pause of horror took possession of the town, during which the single surviving member of the clan, Gianpaolo Baglioni, returned, declared himself master of the city, draped it in black, and proceeded with a deadly thoroughness to burn the houses, confiscate the property, and proscribe the lives of any who he thought were

implicated in the plot. Perugia suffered him for twenty years and his sons for nearly another twenty, then Pope Paul III. put an end to the tyranny and took direct possession of the city. Even so the Baglioni palaces might still be towering over the landscape, were it not that in 1540 the Perugians, in their inveterate defiance, rebelled against the Pope in the matter of a tax, and he determined to administer them an unforgettable lesson. By his order their palaces were pulled down, and in their place rose a great citadel garrisoned by Papal soldiers, for the declared purpose *ad coercendam Perusinorum audaciam*. Now, as once befell the Sienese, they were compelled to keep in their midst a stronghold which sheltered the instruments of their own subjection. It stood, a fearful thorn in the city's side, until 1860, when as new-made Italians, and no longer fiefs of the Pope, they were able devoutly and joyfully to destroy it. The Prefecture now occupies the twice-cursed site, destined to perish not violently, one hopes, but by the peaceful process of time; and the dazzling and once awful name of Baglioni is now borne only by a single street in Perugia, and, more doubtfully, by a few peasants of the countryside. And so the glory of the world changes, even if it does not pass.

As might be expected of a city with such a chronicle, Perugia is temperamental—not with the

rich and obvious temperamentalism of the south, but with a certain cool impenetrableness and reserve, and a determination not to declare herself too readily to the enquirer. Many cities—Siena and Arezzo, for example—quite cheerfully give themselves up in a day; but not so Perugia. It takes longer than that to grasp her plan alone, and to understand how she lies like a great spider upon a group of hills, with the main body of her buildings piled on top, and with long shafts raying out into the surrounding country, cut off from each other by deep green valleys. She is perforce a city of innumerable gateways, of ups and downs and short cuts, with a mile of alleys and shallow red corkscrew stairways for every hundred yards of straightforward street; and she is a city of glorious and incomparable views, which alter strangely in character as one moves round the city from south to north.

On the south side, below that bland and modern terrace that surrounds the Prefettura, once the site of the fatal Baglioni palaces, the whole of Umbria seems to lie spread out like a map. It is little wonder that Perugia was once grasping and covetous, for never was a city set so like mistress in the midst of her dominions. The communes of Assisi, Spello, Foligno and Montefalco, seen now as a row of grey villages tucked among the first folds

of the Apennines, must have seemed always her natural fiefs. Over this expanse the colours, which vary with the sun, are always very softly blue and green, and are broken and made pale by the mist, which lies on bright days like long horizontal streaks of lightest silver above the long valleys, and on dull days tones the wide outlook to an almost colourless harmony of green and grey. It is a landscape of innumerable low horizons, in which there seems nothing perpendicular but the immediately near spires of the city's own churches; and it is exactly the landscape in its blue and green and silver, and its wide airiness and illimitable soft space, that is the background of all Perugino's pictures. Sunset behind those ridges is a marvel—both on soft spring days when the whole air is tinged with an opalescence that progresses through the same tone of every colour in the scale to darkness, and in winter, when huge, almost tangible rays of misty red light seem to pour over the city from behind hills outlined hard as iron against the red of the sky.

All the south-east part of the city, both the wide and airy terrace of the Prefettura that looks three ways, and the long promontory of houses running out to the slender spire of S. Pietro, give out upon the same soft and infinitely spacious view. At the south-west the country is already changing, and

walking round under the walls from Porta Eburnea to Porta S. Susanna, one can see its new character unfold. There the surrounding hills are higher and grander, and the country does not float blandly away from under the city walls, but drops in a sudden deep and V-shaped valley from the arms of a concave angle in the perimeter of houses. Such another valley lies between the Porta Conca and the Porta S. Angelo, the gate that ends the long promontory of the Borgo, and another, wider and more magnificent, between the Borgo and Monteluce. At the apex of that angle, at the topmost point of the city, the wise Perugians have left a little open space, called the Piazza delle Prome, for looking out. There, flanked at first by the long arms of houses, but escaping soon into an infinity of hills, is the characteristic northern landscape, with barer heights and harder colours, and the strange bright yellow of the Umbrian soil uncovered in innumerable roads and paths and bare patches of earth that make a curious contrast with the seasonable greens of olives, or young wheat, or dry autumn grass. Here the spring and summer beauties of the landscape are inconsiderable beside those of winter, when the whole stretch lies under the hard and bitter colours of the snow, that shade from the whiteness and sparkle of the far peaks to the desolate grey of the nearest hills, barely within the snow-

line. This dead landscape gives its true value to the colours of the houses of the Borgo, which wheel out in an intricate sweep of packed roofs and walls along the lines of its main street, and of the greyish-yellow sweep of city wall that forms the right arm of the angle, and of that corkscrew stone stairway, the reddest and curliest and most precipitous in the whole city, that plunges off the little Piazza to the left, down to the great Etruscan arch.

Perugia has throughout marvellously different winter and summer faces. In the warm weather she is silvery and bland and even comparatively cool, blown over by that perennial hill-top wind that is a benediction even though it raises the dust. But in winter the wind is a scourge that whirls the snow in tearing eddies across her open spaces and drives it with fury down her steep, narrow alleys of streets, where the men and women go with cloaks and shawls drawn over their mouths, and heads down as though fleeing before a curse. Then Perugia, icy and impenetrable and withdrawn into herself, remote from the modern world as if she had never seen a tourist or a motor-car, takes on the aspect that her fierce history has designed for her, and becomes a piece with her own stormy and vindictive past.

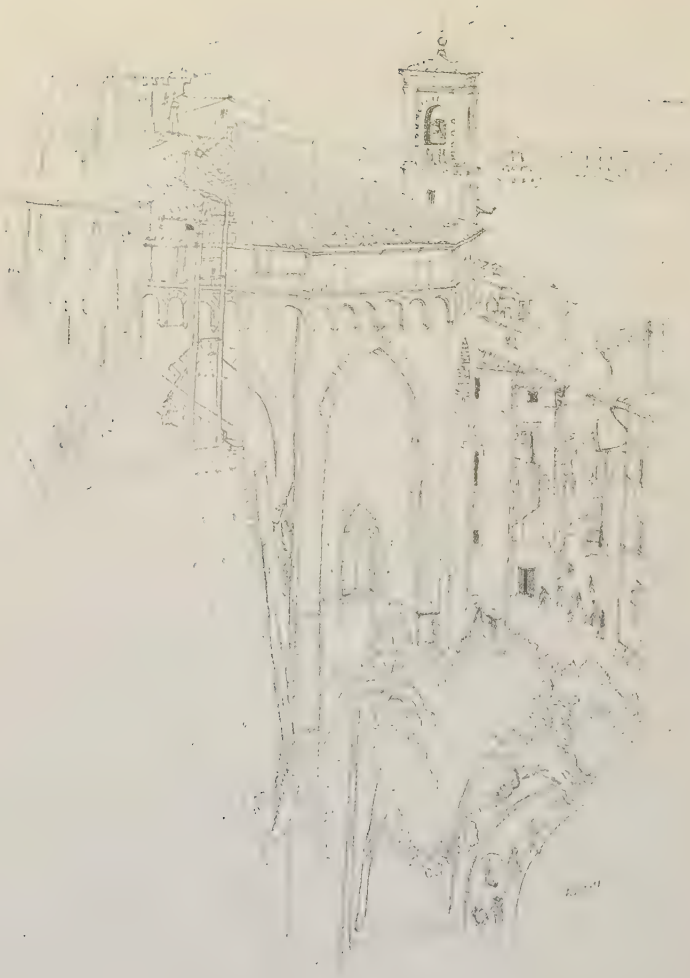
CHAPTER II

PERUGIA

Baedeker, with comic and characteristic ruthlessness, allows for Perugia one day and a half. He computes naturally on the principle that Florence is to be inspected in five days, and that it takes a whole long fortnight to see Rome, and takes his stand on the double hypothesis that the traveller is not only indefatigable, but also rigidly indeflectible, except by a legitimate "object of interest." By anyone who accepts his standards (and an astonishing number of free-born English and Americans do), here, as always, he must be admitted to be right; for Perugia, for an Italian city of its size and importance, is quite surprisingly ill-furnished with the usual run of artistic and architectural splendours. To those lovers of Italy whose holiday preoccupation it is to assume æsthetics, although ordinarily they have them not in the least, the city blandly offers practically nothing at all. But to the other class of travellers who obstinately continue with their humanities abroad, who have the temerity to be openly lazy, spending whole hours lying under olive-trees, or looking on

at bowls, or watching white oxen draw their unbelievably antiquated ploughs, or steering a heedless course up and down steep alleys and twisting stairways, Perugia is as perfect as a city need be. To them, too, she will disclose what artistic nature she does possess, which appears not so much in the shape of masterpieces of pictures and palaces as in fine woodwork and modest façades of old churches, faced in characteristic squares of soft-toned pink and yellow stone, and in the lovely mellow colours and intricate lay-out of her roofs and walls.

Perhaps the best and most systematic way of becoming acquainted with the town is to explore the main body of it first, and then each of the promontories, not forgetting to go a country walk every time an outermost gate is reached. The city is by no means a thing that can be digested at one gasp, for in addition to its octopus-like formation, which seems to make every one place of interest at the extreme end of the earth from every other, there is the aggravation of innumerable ups and downs and the fixed condition that any return journey will be uphill and correspondingly exhausting. There is, however, a plateau, more or less level, at the top of the hill, and this from earliest times has been the city proper. On it the one important and civic street, named the Corso Vannucci after Perugino, runs



ABOVE S. ERCOLANO, PERUGIA

directly south and north from the terrace of the Prefecture to the Cathedral; and parallel with it is the equally busy and less imposing long Piazza of the market-place.

As far as buildings are concerned, Perugia makes not the least attempt to vie with her two great associates Florence and Siena. She evidently concentrated her constructive energies on the single pile of the Municipio, whose amplitude was sufficient in early days, as it is now, to house, entertain and provide offices for every civic and public body in the city; and then turned her attention to the ever-present and pressing business of subduing her neighbours and settling her own feuds. The Municipio is certainly magnificent, not so much for any coherent beauty of plan, but for its size, its venerability, and the splendid dulled colours imparted to it by age. It is rectangular in shape, and standing as it does on a corner, shows forth two splendid façades, the longer of which overshadows the whole upper part of the Corso. Four horizontal lines cross its straight face, two of them made by splendid windows, which are one of the chief architectural beauties of Umbria, and the other two consisting of the wide arches of the ground floor, filled in by shops, and the square regular embattlementing of the roof.

The chief beauty of the building is its main

entrance, which is of a type especially characteristic of Perugia, and the *chef-d'œuvre* of its kind. It is a great round doorway of red and white marble—marble once red and white, that is, but now toned to a very soft dull yellow and a dusty pink. The actual entrance is square, like a Roman doorway, outlined immediately by a fine flat frieze; in the lunette above it are three prim saintly or ecclesiastical sculptured personages, in white against a dull red background, and the whole is beautifully surrounded by courses of carved and twisted red marble. In the outermost course two great griffins of Perugia stand level with the saints, and at about six feet from the ground two crouching lions, whose carved pedestals are so smooth and polished and tawny with age that it is impossible not to finger and stroke them as one passes.

It is strange to find this lovely and inviting door leading not to a palace entrance, but to something like the basement of an ordinary building—a dim and cavernous stone expanse, with square naked piers upholding a vaulted roof, and a shallow stone staircase leading upwards to regions of light and air. It must at any rate have been a useful storehouse in times of war.

The shorter façade of the Municipio is less regular, but on the whole more delightful. It, too, has a fine round doorway, surmounted by a lion and a griffin

(the first for the Guelfs and the second for Perugia), who still dangle from their claws a length of iron chain taken as a trophy from Siena in 1358; but it also has a charming three-arched loggia, supporting a balcony, which is approached by a staircase of semicircular stone steps, and garnished with characteristic squares of pink and yellow. This face looks out upon the Piazza del Municipio, bounded on the far side by the Cathedral, and squarely occupied by that delicious fountain that is the best art treasure Perugia has. There is something supremely comfortable and satisfactory about this old square, which is hardly the result of architectural splendours, but rather of a certain mellowness and good-temper that pervades it. The side of the Cathedral, which apparently the Perugians once had an idea of decorating into a façade, is patterned half-way up its height with faded checks to bring it into line with the Municipio across the way, and is further adorned with a pleasing outside pulpit, built especially for S. Bernardino of Siena. Above that, token of either poverty or faint-heartedness, emerges the naked brick of the building.

The fountain is as old as 1277, and was the work of two of the Pisani, Niccolà and Giovanni, who had, towards the end of the task, the help of Arnolfo di Cambio. It is in the flat and primitive style of the earliest Pisan work, much less elaborate

and much more beautiful than those famous and much-wrought pulpits at Pisa and Pistoia and elsewhere, that created such a stir. It consists of three basins, the top one small and round and plain, and the other two polygonal and decorated with sculpture. Round the second stand, like caryatids, at the angles, straight Gothic figures of sacred or historical interest, identified nowadays, one fancies, more or less according to the taste of the observer, and the third basin is decorated with fifty panels in low relief, covered by a variety of subjects. Starting, as one conveniently may, at the lady and the knight on horseback who look towards the Municipio (a gallant and delicious couple, especially the lady on her stout palfrey, with her falcon at her wrist), one passes a succession of husbandmen, ploughing, sowing, reaping, treading the grapes, curing bacon, and so forth, to typify the occupations of the months. These are very close kin to a set of early stone reliefs on the façade of S. Martino at Lucca, and have the same simple, almost nursery-like charm. Everything here is as naïve as it is graphic, and the animals and the humans are all equally delightful. Nothing could be lovelier or lustier than the stag-like oxen that draw the plough, and nothing could be more graphically dead than the carcass of pig hung up at due season for quartering. A series of slightly more allegorical figures follows,

females, and said to represent the liberal arts, but susceptible, like a lot of figures in early Italian art, of any convenient private interpretation. Two very handsome eagles divide them from a selection of episodes from the Bible, interspersed with some scenes of natural history strongly reminiscent of Æsop, and also Romulus and Remus and that gratefully remembered foster-mother of theirs who did so much for the world.

The pleasantest way to enjoy the fountain and the whole square is to sit on the stone ledge beside the Cathedral, under Bernardino's pulpit, just within hail of the curious and inevitable church odour of must and incense that floats out of the door, and watch the pigeons making their endless journeys between it and the Municipio. From there, too, one can admire the fine old palace on the corner opposite, and, staring straight down the Corso, be certain that the misty blueness that succeeds upon the edge of the terrace can be nothing but the sea. This side of the Cathedral, with the great three-arched loggia of Braccio Fortebraccio adjoining, is the only part of it that is entertaining, unless one counts the Cannonica behind it, which with its new cloister, plastered with interesting fragments of antiquity, and the semi-submerged and beautiful half of its old one, is certainly well worth seeing. Inside S. Lorenzo is dark and painfully decorated,

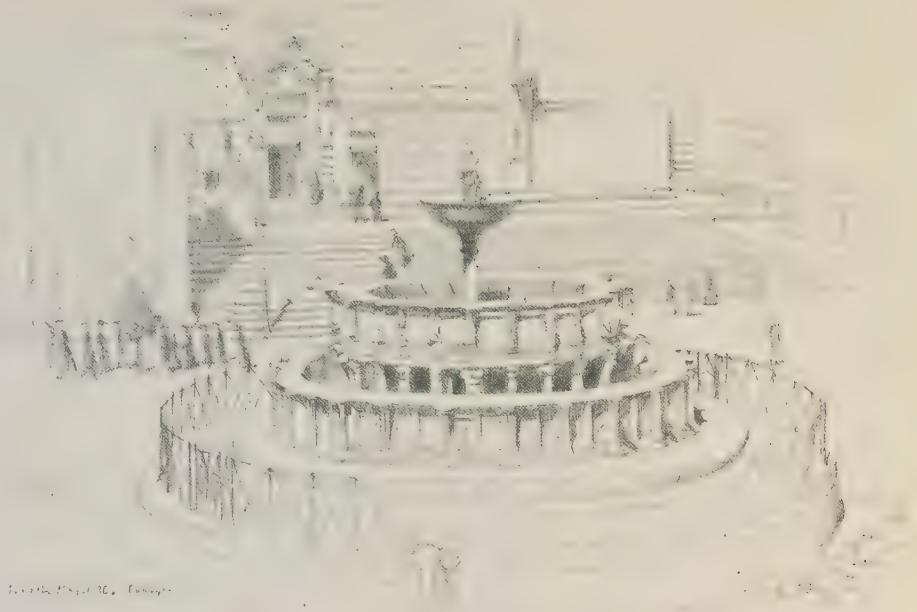
and contains a few art treasures that make no impression on the prevailing gloom. It possesses a precious relic in the shape of the betrothal ring of the Virgin, which has a chapel to itself. Just inside the door on the right is a beautiful old tomb set high in the wall, and in the left aisle is an interesting Pietà in stone relief against a blue background by Agostino di Duccio. There are also some finely carved choir stalls, but they are not the best of their kind, which is so common in Perugia as to entitle one to be very nice in admiration.

Just behind S. Lorenzo once stood the house of the Podestà, or chief magistrate, which, with the Town Hall and the Cathedral, formed the indispensable trinity of every city's architectural dignity. It was, however, burnt down beyond hope of reconstruction, and there remains of it nothing but a small and extremely beautiful round marble doorway, banded in red and yellow, leading to nowhere, and planted in the midst of that dark and mysterious junction of steep stone alleyways, spanned by arches, called the Maestà delle Volte. This meeting of ways behind the Cathedral is the best taking-off place for exploring the long promontory of the Borgo, and the right way of setting out is along the Via dell' Acquedotto, which discovers itself, usually not without a few false starts, immediately round a corner. This narrow overhead way

that once brought water to the fountain now takes the pedestrian across the valley to the Borgo, into the midst of that splendid, colourful and eminently Perugian picture of roofs and houses piled against the hillside, and eventually into the Corso Garibaldi, a long road, deeply muddy or dusty according to the season of the year, with something romantic in its antiquity and a good deal prosaic about its poverty and everyday humble occupations. Nearly at the end of it, up a walled path on the right, stands the little old church of S. Angelo, a charming sight, and doubly charming to come upon unexpectedly. It is a little round, grey building with a pointed Gothic door, all of it very weather-beaten and old. Its shape has given rise to a superstition that it was once a Roman temple dedicated to Venus and later converted to the uses of Christianity. The building in its present incarnation was probably always Christian, but some of the columns in the interior, very fine ones arranged in a ring, and the altar are almost certainly Roman. Nearly opposite the Via del Tempietto is the road leading to the convent of S. Agnese, where one is encouraged to go on the track of two frescoes, by Perugino and Pinturicchio, and where one forgets one's æsthetic disappointment in the enjoyment of the convent courtyard, big and sunny and flowery and haphazard, with a delightful semi-submerged

cloister and an old well. The S. Angelo gate, tall and red-brick and impressive, frames the lovely picture of the convent of S. Francesco al Monte which stands in an ideal Italian harmony of grey stone and straight dark cypresses just outside the city wall. A long, steep and much-trodden path of red cobbles leads to the entrance, and up this holy Louis IX. of France, the royal saint, is said to have climbed to visit the Blessed Egidio, one of the first of St. Francis of Assisi's disciples. There, the story is, the king found the holy man in his cell, and embraced him like his brother, and said no word and went away. And when later the monks asked Egidio what had passed between them, and were astonished and indignant to hear that nothing had, Egidio answered that he and the royal visitor had spoken to each other in their hearts, so that words between them would have been useless. From beside the monastery is a delightful view of S. Angelo, lifting its head above the city wall, and below it drops away into the splendid landscape of hills, one of Perugia's steep valleys, in spring exquisite with wild flowers and bird-song and feathery white trees of blossom.

On the way back through the Borgo, keeping along the Corso Garibaldi, one passes the church of S. Agostino, comically patched and battered on the outside and contrastingly spruce and white-



FONTANA MAGGIORE, PERUGIA

washed within. In its choir are the most splendid of all the carved and inlaid stalls that beautify so many churches of Perugia, these enhanced by a special prodigality and variety of design that seems to belong particularly to the wood-carver's fancy.

Nearly opposite the church, a little way off the main road, is the University, removed from the town into the quarters of a suppressed monastery, and housing the city's important collection of Etruscan and Roman antiquities, which are far more lively and entertaining than they sound. Examples of every kind of Etruscan work are to be found there, all of interest and many of beauty, including some of the longest extant inscriptions, impenetrable as ever. For the traveller unversed in archæology, the Etruscans' household goods and gods are a greater pleasure—their beautiful vases of *bucchero nero*, their terra-cotta pitchers and platters, their pins and knives and helmets, of which the bronze is now bright blue and green with age, their engraved mirrors, their chafing-dishes and bronze erections for the Greek game of Kottabos, their delicate gold filigree jewellery and blue beads. Only a stone's throw from them is that magnificent Etruscan relic still *in situ*, the famous arch, called after the Emperor Augustus, who restored it after the city had been burnt down.

It was a gateway in the earliest circuit of walls, and if it and the length of masonry that adjoins it are a fair specimen of Etruscan building, it is easy to see how to force an entrance into their cities was no light feat even for Roman arms. The arch itself is of no great height, but is topped with many courses of stone, which bring it up to the level of the two tremendous bastions, each like a truncated pyramid, that flank it. The left one is incongruously and charmingly crowned by an airy loggia, the exalted position of which must make its owners feel very safe indeed. The whole arch is as solid and imposing a piece of antiquity as is to be seen anywhere in Italy, and is a monument of truly amazing magnificence. Just beside it is the beginning of that steep and winding red stairway that leads such as are strong in the legs up to the Piazza delle Prome, and so, by way of a pause for regaining breath and admiring the incomparable view, back to the town.

This may well be the moment for a second inspection of the Municipio, of which the interior has three claims upon the tourist—the picture Gallery, the Cambio, and the Sala dei Notari, which is less important than the other two, but at the same time less controversial, so that it might be a good plan to make a beginning there.

It is a huge room of unique pattern and extreme

beauty, once the lawyers' hall, and now still sometimes happily pressed into service for public occasions. It is of curious construction, with great arc-like vaultings springing from low down on one wall clear across the ceiling to the level of deep window niches on the other side, so that the room has the appearance of a short wide tunnel. The walls and the ceiling are covered with frescoes, and the fine old windows, deep set between the vaultings, seem like a succession of tiny chapels on the outer side of the room. Three tiers of wooden benches run down the long walls and provide excellent sitting-room and sober decoration. Every once in a while when some public function fills it with bands and banners and the beautiful Italian uniforms and a lively and overflowing audience, the room takes on some of the splendour it must have known in its medieval and decorative days; and never, probably, in all its history has it been more colourful and noisy and filled with music than when Fascismo, in the high tide of its popularity, rallied its supporters there, with their silver-staffed tricolour banners, black uniforms and cockades, all massed against the mellow frescoed blue and crimson walls, and drenched in a blaring flood of music from the city's congregated brass bands.

As far as the gallery and the Cambio are concerned, Perugino pervades them artistically, as he

does a good deal of Umbria. He is an artist with a devoted following, whose constancy is proof against surprising trials, not the least of which must be the gallery at Perugia, where the walls of two whole rooms are covered with his uniformly less fortunate performances. At his best, as the painter of the Sistine Chapel and the Chapel of S. Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi at Florence, he is exquisite; he is the perfector of the Umbrian school, with his particular characteristics of softness and spaciousness and fair and massive still figures standing against the wide and airy blue background of his native landscape; but at Perugia he is never at his best, and reminds one continually of the fact that he was a money-loving painter who undertook more commissions than he could possibly execute up to standard.

In the gallery his work is mostly a travesty of his best style, sweet but not strong, showing all his characteristics and occasional glimpses of his charm, and practically nothing of his real power and quality. The best of the collection are probably that Madonna Enthroned with Angels in the first room, which is certainly gracious and pretty and very faithfully predicts Raphael, and the rather curious Pietà, in which the dead Christ seems to stand alone or upheld by invisible supporters. Most of the other misty and blurry Peruginos and

S. ANGELO, PERUGIA

semi-Peruginos are objects for sad reflection rather than for admiration.

Nor is the rest of the collection of very great interest. It is arranged chronologically, and begins with Umbrian and Sienese primitives of which the first, rather stolid and uninteresting, accurately foreshadow the placid and unvital types that follow in the Umbrian school, and the latter, more attractive, can naturally be seen in far greater plenty and perfection at Siena. Things improve, however, in the beautiful little ceiled and panelled chapel of the Priors, decorated with historical frescoes by Bonfigli. These are really interesting, and it is always delightful to be in Perugia in the twentieth century and see it depicted in the fifteenth, made recognisable with all its churches and towers crammed into one charming and impossible view. A little later on Benedetto Bonfigli has a room to himself. He is a most entertaining artist, individual if nothing else, and with a remarkably curious and insipid type of Ideal beauty, decked out in stiff and voluminous apparel. Never was so strange, thin and overdressed an angel seen as he shows in his Annunciation. But he is an excellent storyteller, and one of the best inducements to visiting the gallery, as he cannot be seen anywhere else. There is a suggestion that he was Perugino's earliest master, but if this is so, his pupil must have been uncannily

thorough in shaking off the lessons of his apprenticeship. Perhaps the best picture in the gallery is Benozzo Gozzoli's Madonna and Saints, with its straight lines and its dull fine and rich colours. There is a good altarpiece by Piero della Francesca, hardly comparable with his glorious frescoes at Arezzo and Borgo San Sepolcro, but precious because of a beautiful and lifelike picture of S. Clare in one of the panels. Neither the Fra Angelico nor the Pinturicchio connect themselves, except remotely, with those great names.

The Cambio, that other temple of Perugino, is at the far end of the Municipio, on the ground floor. There in the Money-Changers' rich and close little hall he painted a straight and rather monotonous and inexplicable series of famous Greeks and Romans, accompanied by the personified virtues—a juxtaposition formally hallowed by the mists of distance—all of them very proper and well-executed, and all of them accurate rather than appealing. His own portrait, a small and modest execution, his broad face and small flattish features surmounted by a red fez, is of far greater pleasure and interest. On the narrow wall he painted two scenes from the New Testament, an Adoration and a Transfiguration, of which both are good, and the second worthy to compare with his best work. The Perugian money-changers seem to have been well able to

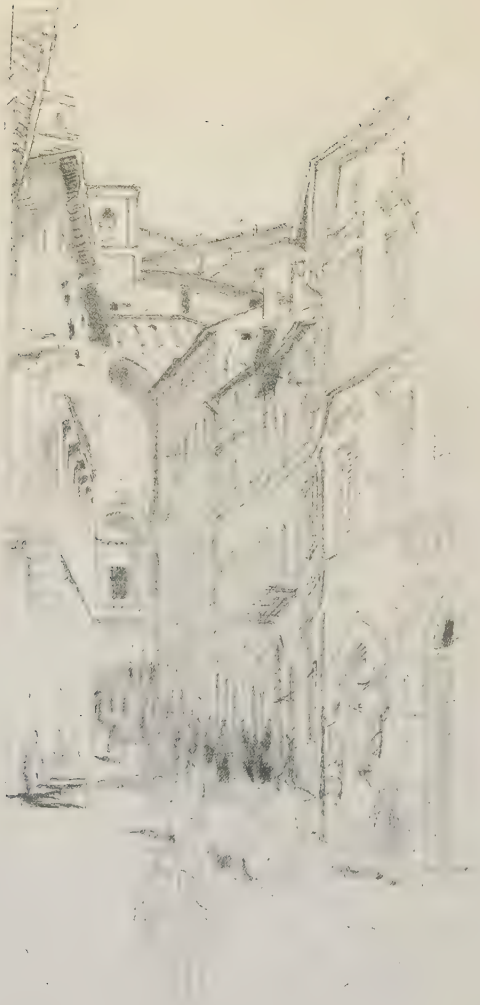
afford to indulge their fancies, for their premises are adorned not only with frescoes, but with some very rich and wonderful wood-carving and intarsia-work, both in the ante-room that precedes Perugino and the rather charming tiny chapel that follows him.

It often occurs to critics to wonder how the fierce and bloodthirsty Perugians came to breed and admire such a gentle and syrupy type of art as appears in the pictures of Perugino and his school; but the explanation is probably the simple one that men who lived in the hideously practical way of the Baglioni and their kind required a holiday in their art, and liked it as romantic and remote as those pale, sweet and wispy-haired Madonnas could make it.

CHAPTER III

PERUGIA

From under an arch of the Municipio, the Via dei Priori runs through one of the smaller promontories to the Porta S. Susanna. It is a steep characteristic street, lined with tall houses, and cool or icily cold according to the season. Just beyond a handsome pointed gate which marks the old circuit of the walls is the Piazza of S. Francesco, where is S. Bernardino's oratory, the goal of another artistic pilgrimage. The Perugians, having mocked and flouted the founder of the Franciscans, at least did handsomely by the reviver of the Order, though whether they laid his word lastingly to heart is not recorded. The story is that when St. Francis preached in the Piazza they tired of his eloquence, and began tilting at each other on the edge of the crowd; but when S. Bernardino of Siena promised them a visit, they built him not only a lovely pulpit on the side of the Cathedral for public exhortation, but an oratory for private prayer as well. They chose a spot on the edge of the city, very properly close by the church of S. Francesco, and Agostino di Duccio was entrusted with the work of orna-



CORSO CAVOUR, PERUGIA

mentation. Whether one considers he made a good job of it depends on one's fondness for polychrome monuments. The sky-blue mixed up with the sculpture is by no means everybody's taste, and almost confirms the theory that if colour is to be used successfully on the outside of a building, it should be used in quantities, with a flourish, as on the cathedral at Orvieto. The sculpture is, on the whole, charming, but rather weakly, and not very coherent in arrangement. The best of it is among the panels in relief on either side of the doorway, which are said to represent the Christian virtues, and look like lovely singing girls, in a Florentine manner oddly tinctured with Burne-Jones. The Piazza itself, usually sheltered and sunny, with a hint of green grass, and always occupied by a band of schoolboys at ball, or a group of half-fledged athletes very solemnly in training, is really more attractive than the oratory, and between S. Bernardino and S. Francesco is a delightful and characteristically Perugian corner, in the familiar two-colour harmony of pink and orange checks. S. Francesco, pleasant enough outside, is a melancholy warning within that paint and stucco are not materials worthy the builders' hands. It is completely dismantled and decayed, and is a disturbing example of what age can do for one of those great plastered and pretentious baroque

churches one sees all over Italy. A really good building can never be reduced to ignominy, however little of it survives, but S. Francesco has been brought, among its cobwebs and peelings, inconceivably low. However, it still preserves a kind of usefulness, if no dignity, and gives impartial shelter to a collection of homeless chariots, including a donkey-cart and a hearse.

Below S. Francesco the road curves to the Porta S. Susanna and the boundaries of the present city. It is a splendid old gateway, that ushers one out upon the road that runs right and left round under the walls, or upon a straight, steep, modern path that leads down to the first low, round hill of the country, sacred in spring to daffodils and dark blue anemones. Beyond it the road runs out to the authentic hills, fine and dark and enticing to those that have time and courage to explore them. From the Porta S. Susanna it is a level saunter round to the Porta Eburnea, with the splendid view always beside one, and from the Porta Eburnea it is an anything but level clamber back to the town.

Down the Porta Eburnea converges a maze of short ancient streets as medieval as any monument in the city. They are hardly more than flinty paths between massive stone walls, often bridged by arches or even entire houses, steep, cold, mysterious, and mostly very stiff going. Among them

the Via del Paradiso, naturally the straightest and most difficult of them all, scrambles up in breathless steps under the Etruscan wall, and up and down it pass, on their prosaic way to the station, those romantic figures, black-cloaked and black-shawled, that still constitute part of the Italian working-classes, whose picturesqueness, by a divine dispensation, fits exactly into its surroundings, and seems as ageless as they are.

Part of the angle between the Porta Eburnea and the Porta S. Pietro is occupied by the Piazza d'Armi, a huge expanse of yellow beaten earth, officially consecrated to the army's manœuvres. From a distance it seems one of the least inviting prospects in Perugia, but it is deeply interesting near to, because there the game of bowls, a national pastime, but a Perugian passion, can be observed in a hundred shapes and fancies and degrees of skill. Bowls in Perugia, as played by every age, including greybeards and babies, and by every shade of athleticism, from footballers to shove-ha'penn'ists, is an altogether more exciting and sporting affair than its English equivalent. An outfit may consist of anything from a set of big round wooden balls, the official paraphernalia, to a handful of flat stones used quoit-wise, and the pitch is any piece of ground that comes handy, quite often a stretch of road sloping sharply up or down hill,

which considerably increases the sporting element and requires a high degree of skill. Perhaps the most fascinating feature of the game is that the last man is not constrained to bowl his bowl, but is allowed, if he chooses, to take a run and full-pitch it, and thus, instead of insinuating himself into a place, bring about a wholesale devastation of the field, from which he blindly hopes that good may come. It is not too safe to be in the neighbourhood when this manœuvre is being practised, but it is a fine thing to observe from a distance; for this last bolt is never shot without a discobolus-like spring and fury, and a magnificent effect of earthquake and climax.

At the far end of the Piazza d'Armi, at a slightly lower level is the site of the Tuesday cattle market, which is as good an example of its kind as is to be seen in Italy. The white cattle are probably the first sight to rouse in the traveller's breast an authentic classical, and so romantic pang, and are likely to be his final and loving recollection of Italy; and there is hardly an intermediate time when he can see them and remain unmoved. That common spectacle of two oxen drawing an ancient plough under olive-trees, in the colours of creamy white and olive grey against the dark earth, recreates Hesiod, Theocritus, and Virgil, at a single blow, and centres in itself the traveller's every image, vague or lucid, of pastoral

antiquity. A love for the great white cattle is the most universal and spontaneous of all emotions connected with Italy.

To the market the beasts come still in the classical manner—garlanded, that is, for sacrifice, though not yoked with flowers, but with red ribbon twisted in and out their horns. They seem preserved and tended against market-day, for they show no signs of being galled with labour, and enjoy their full magnificence. The oxen are splendid, some of them so big as to have almost the strangeness of prehistoric animals, with their huge shoulders and the tremendous sweep of their horns ; but the loveliest sight of all is the baby bulls, who seem to be brought in just at that moment when they are still young enough to be delicate and exquisite, but yet present in every line and muscle their magnificent promise of strength. They, too, come most often with red ribbons in their horns, and also with a load of black mischief in their hearts that keeps them butting their guides in the back, and escaping as often as they can into the open space of the Piazza d'Armi—a feat which pleases the tourist who has not to re-assemble them almost as much as it does their innocent selves. The procedure of the men who come to market, of the farmers, dealers, butchers, bargain-makers, connoisseurs and hangers-on, is the universal and im-

memorial one—parading of beasts, examination of points, prodding with sticks, shouting, bargaining, and frenzied joining of hands by a third party who is presumably entitled to a commission on sales. The cattle market is a good place to observe what a temperate, if animated, race the Italians are, for nobody, either then or later, appears to be drunk. It is always difficult to detect any upshot to the chaffering, but some of the beasts presumably do change hands, and towards midday they are driven back under the walls to the Porta S. Costanzo, and so into the country whence they came. Just beyond the gate there are some shallow steps in their path, and to catch a convoy of cattle of all ages letting themselves slowly down into the road is as lucky a thing as the camera can happen upon anywhere in the peninsula.

The long promontory of S. Pietro is, on the whole, the most level and respectable quarter of the city, though not the most interesting to explore piece by piece. A bird's-eye view of it is, however, exquisite, such as unfolds below a corner of the Terrace, where, looking out through pale mists towards Assisi (the most fascinating and endlessly indulged of all occupations at Perugia), the eyes dwell first on a foreground of square, intricately packed roofs, dominated close at hand by the huge bulk of S. Domenico, with its empty, airy tower,

and tapering at the end to the delicate spire of S. Pietro, rising like a landmark at the farthermost edge of the town. One way to S. Pietro runs round the base of the terrace, under the huge walls, where, just behind a pleasant fountain with a faun, can be seen the remains of a magnificent old gateway, either Etruscan or Roman, now long filled in with masonry. Another way descends from a corner of the Piazza Garibaldi, which, since it belongs to the ward of S. Pietro, is topographically within the limits of the excursion.

The Piazza Garibaldi, a long, paved space, once called "Sopramura," is second in importance only to the Corso, and is nearly always as crowded. Only in the Corso people magnificently do their banking and lounge at coffee (the prevailing winds permitting) on the pavements, while in the Piazza they modestly buy stamps or bootlaces, and the more informal of the vegetable women sit with their huge round plaited baskets of fruit and greenstuff in the gutter. For the Piazza is of course the market, and a very lovely one, too, with that special Perugian charm of simplicity and unselfconsciousness, miraculously preserved in spite of the tourists. An Italian market is, like Italian oxen, a source of unsophisticated delight that does not stale as it repeats itself in town after town. Its surroundings are, at any rate, always different,

although its colours and procedure, and the barrow-loads of goods purveyed, are constant and invariable. Here at Perugia the stalls are grouped round Garibaldi, himself wreathed in pigeons come over from the Municipio presumably for scraps, and enclosed between the fine modern *palazzo* of the post-office, and the two handsome and modest old buildings of the ancient University and the palace of the Podestà, built after the destruction of his earlier residence in the Maestà della Volte. Both buildings rely largely on their rows of windows for decoration, but the house of the Podestà boasts as well another of those beautiful round Perugian doorways, a modest edition of the main entrance of the Municipio, with decorated doorposts and a sculptured figure of Justice against the red background of the lunette. It has also a charming balcony, of the pattern of one of the Della Robbia singing galleries, from which edicts and justice were proclaimed in the old days.

From the Piazza Garibaldi the Via dell' Ospedale leads towards S. Pietro, not past any perceptible hospital, but through a dark and mildly prosperous flagged street of shops, under a gateway and down a fine red stairway, that twists round the walls of the church of S. Ercolano, which grow higher and more fortress-like as one descends the hill. Looking back from the bottom one gets a really splendid

S. DOMENICO, PERUGIA

view of red curving stairs, vanishing uphill under a Gothic arch (once a gateway in the earliest circuit of walls), and of the wall of S. Ercolano, that reaches perpendicularly from one level of the city to the other, towering up with its feet on the lower earth and its head in the clouds. In spite of its great surface of wall it is only a tiny church inside, a dim little hexagon, with a Roman sarcophagus as high altar, in which are preserved the bones of the church's bishop and saint, who heroically encouraged the Perugians against the Goths. Originally there were two churches, one above the other, inside the high wall, but the upper one was destroyed in the sixteenth century.

A surprising church to find in Perugia, or indeed anywhere, is S. Domenico, which rises up huge among the houses only a stone's throw away. It is imposing from a distance, with its square curtailed tower and its grimly primitive plan, but near to seems merely massive and immense in comparison with its surroundings, with an appearance of unnecessary inelegance and bluntness. Giovanni Pisano is said to have designed it, but even so it cannot be regarded as a success. The interior, a waste of whitewash, huge and clean and deserted, is enlivened by the presence of one art treasure, the tomb of Pope Benedict IX., also attributed to Giovanni Pisano, and most worthy of his name.

It is in the regular Gothic style, enclosed in a pointed canopy, with a prim and beautiful characteristic Pisan group of Madonna and Saints filling the niche above the actual tomb. Below it two angels pull aside a curtain to disclose the Pope lying flat and rigid on his coffin, finely and delicately carved, and the whole thing is framed by twisted marble columns decorated with Cosmati work, and with tiny, charming and inappropriate figures, like little loves, that swarm about them. Many of these last have been cruelly battered and ill-treated, but for the rest the tomb is fairly perfect, and is an object of extreme beauty.

Just beside a corner of S. Domenico, where the inevitable facing of pink and yellow marble has been begun and, in view of the acreage of the walls, as inevitably abandoned, is a charming old well-head, with the Perugian griffin still faintly ramping on one of its battered panels. He is an ancient and heroic creature, as old as any record of the city, and in spite of the decay of emblems and devices he manages to survive.

S. Pietro is a fairly monotonous good step from S. Domenico, accomplished more happily on a parallel but dustier route outside the walls, with the view beside one. The church stands very beautifully at the end of the road, on a little mound, the site of the earliest cathedral, and makes an im-

mediate impression by its state of unexpected good repair. The explanation is that when the monastery on the premises was dissolved, the place was taken over as a college of agriculture, and so has been kept well swept and garnished. Of the church itself the Perugians are exceedingly proud, and insist that it is both *ricco* and *splendido*, which it certainly is in comparison with most of the battered art treasures of the city. It is the spire, however, neither rich nor splendid, but rather humble, and kept intact after frequent visitations by lightning with circling iron bands, that is its chief beauty—a pointed erection of no particular architectural pedigree, but graceful and most lovable, and a rare thing in a land where church bells are customarily housed in detached and elaborate towers. The entrance is into a very clean and elegant arcaded courtyard, in the far corner of which is the church doorway, decorated with beautifully carved bunchy marble fruits of the Della Robbia persuasion, but being executed in old marble, of far lovelier colour and texture. The interior of S. Pietro is sumptuous to a degree—a handsome basilica with dark green marble columns and much-frescoed ceiling and walls. It is not exactly beautiful, but obliquely compels the admiration by not being vulgar; and it contains various good pictures and objects of beauty. In the left aisle is a Pietà

of Perugino, hung to advantage, by itself, and showing much of the artist's placid and characteristic charm, and nearly opposite it in the right aisle is a Madonna and Saints by Eusebio di San Giorgio, a very pleasing picture by one of those late Umbrian artists who painted faithfully in Perugino's style. There is another earlier Pietà, placed rather obscurely at the top of the left aisle, which, perhaps, owing to the semi-darkness in which it hangs, has a certain individual and appealing beauty. In it both the Madonna and Saviour, even more fancifully and romantically than usual, are depicted as hardly past adolescence. Near it are an Adoration and a Visitation, also in late Umbrian style, not magnificent artistically, but pleasant in a narrative way, especially the former, which shows a vigorous kind of circus going forward in the tail of the Magi's procession. The pride and glory of the church is its great choir, almost the whole of which, stalls, reading-desk and panelling, is magnificently carved and inlaid. At the back of it, if the custodian is handy, a wonderful scene in intarsia may be split into two, and a door revealed that leads to a tiny airy balcony, hung as it were in the midst of the blue and grey and silver view. Again one looks over the valley, inevitably to Assisi, sometimes across a waste of snow, sometimes across pale olives, and in spring most exquisitely across a

sweep of flowering almond-trees, as white and delicate as mist. A notice implores one not to scribble on the walls of the balcony, and for a wonder they are virgin, except in one spot, where under a careful covering of glass sprawls immune from the whitewasher's brush the signature of Carducci—testimony not only to a visit from the fiery pagan poet, but to the fact that he too was a victim to an incurably nasty national habit.

A little way beyond S. Pietro, a round gate, arched over some amazingly blue distance, leads into the country, past the little church of S. Costanzo (the fourth in the row), and so on to the Etruscan tombs. The church is a delightful wayside affair, with a charming old portal decorated with very early christian symbolic carving, of the regular menagerie flavour, and with a general curious air of having been constructed out of a child's box of bricks. It is seldom opened, except for funerals, and on the saint's day, when lovers repair there, and the legend is that by catching a wink from S. Costanzo's image they ensure for themselves a happy ensuing year.

The three-mile Etruscan excursion is just a little like hard work, whether accomplished on foot or by *carrozza*, for the horse invariably walks for the whole of the return journey, which produces a kind of subtle exhaustion in the freight. The

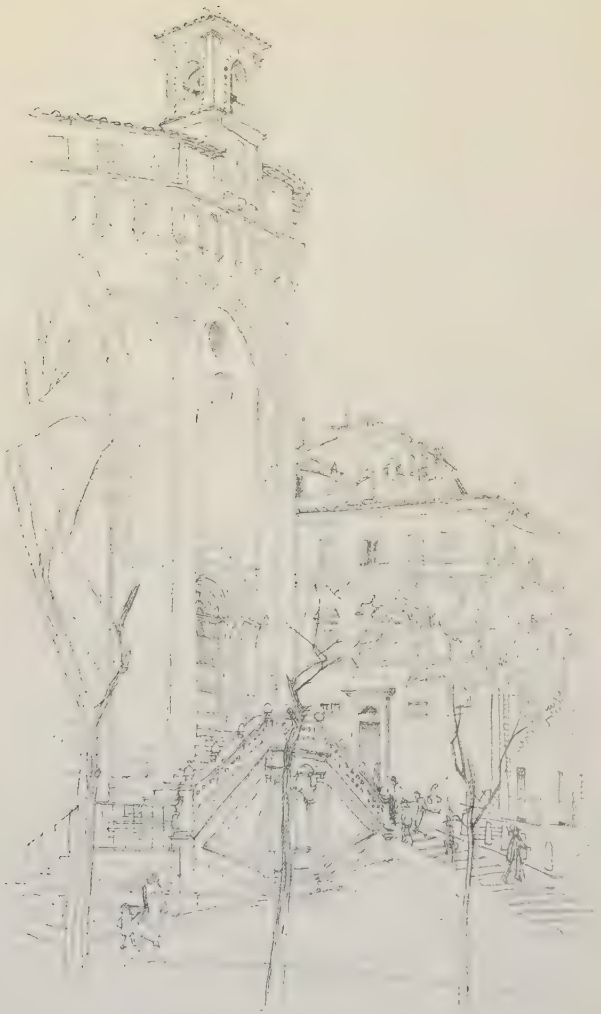
tombs themselves are interesting, though they completely lack the mysterious savour that clings round those of Orvieto and Cortona. They belong probably to the fourth century B.C.—the period when Etruria was merging into Rome, and there is nothing archaic about them. They are, in fact, so neat and scrupulously upkept as to border on unreality, and one waits with trepidation to hear them presently pronounced a fake. The sepulchre, approached by a steep stair cut in the tufa rock, actually consists of six chambers, all containing or destined to contain the ashes of the Volumnia family, whose private vault it is. The urn of the head of the house is in the place of honour in the centre—a handsome little stuccoed erection, surmounted by a reclining figure in late Etruscan style, and beside it and in the adjoining compartments are arranged the lesser urns of the minor members of the family. Artistically the most interesting things the tomb contains are a Medusa head and a figure of the sun carved in the rock of the roof, and a very beautiful terra-cotta lamp supporting the figure of a Hermes or a youth. Everything, with the exception of some bronze and terra-cotta objects removed to an informal little museum at the top of the stairs, has been left exactly as it was discovered, and the whole place leads one to ponder on the rapturous moments

that must occur in the bleak fields of archæology, when somebody, as recently as 1840, stumbles upon so splendid a relic as a whole Etruscan tomb, impeccably preserved and intact. Even in these inquisitive days the surface of Italy is still imperfectly raked over, and there are undoubted treasures awaiting the zeal, or even more urgently the fortune of the excavator.

An excursion to Monteluce, the last of Perugia's promontories if one does not intend to visit the cemetery, is neither artistic nor archæological. It is, in fact, a walk, so common a thing at home, but abroad a quiet pleasure often untasted for weeks in the press of intellectual diversions. The way is up to the Cathedral, down through a steep ancient quarter of the town to the Porta Pesa, and along the arm of Monteluce to the church of that name at its point, a pleasant old yellow and rose building with a handsome double-arched doorway—now almost a private chapel to the hospital, which is spaciously encamped about it. A little way beyond, on the road to Gubbio, stands a private house, modestly advertising "majolica," which turns out to be a little pottery factory, always hospitably open for inspection. There they are charmed to demonstrate from first to last every stage in the history of the hand-made pots that are sold magnificently in the Corso, and to let one

stand as long as one will (and it is usually a long time) before the miracle of the potter's wheel. The place has something of the air of a grown-up kindergarten, especially the painting-room, where a row of youths in paper caps, under the charge of a sprightly bilingual lady, sit daubing away at a long table, with a comical and reluctant look of being kept from their serious play. Some of them have a surprising talent, transmitted usually from past generations, and much of the pottery they turn out is really charming, although some has the appearance of being supplied to cater for mythical foreign whims, which the producers evidently do not understand. They sell here also a splendid kind of hand-woven fabric—rugs and mats and curtains of excellent colours and design.

The usual view of hills, magnificent as ever, unfolds under the road, but this is not quite the aim of the excursion. A little way from the factory an isolated villa stands, approached by a private-looking drive, bordered by irises and a low hedge. Trespassing boldly up this one comes upon a footpath leading to a valley, in the heart of which, removed only a stone's throw from the wind and dust of the road, is a country very like Arcadia. The season must, for the purposes of this fable, be spring; then, to the general effect of olives and white almond-trees, is added the intimate



S. ERCOLANO, PERUGIA

beauty of wild flowers, which flourish here to a marvel. Cyclamen, anemones, periwinkles, and orchids are thick beside the path, not to speak of the minor and no less vivid glories. Half-way down in a stackyard a dog will rush out barking, and a boy warn one that there is only a "fossa" at the bottom, and that the way for a sensible pedestrian would be over the bridge somewhere back on the road. But in spite of his misgivings the course is still directly downwards. Then the "fossa" is revealed to be a clear and rushing stream, flanked with sweet turf, literally pied with flowers, and bordered on either side by spiky poplars with their sticky, yellow, and infinitely fresh young foliage. The colours here are bright as paint, and pure and delicate as the clear pale sunlight can make them. It is not in any sense a characteristic corner of Umbria, not soft and blue and mystical, and shadowed by the wistful saintly figure and the legend of Assisi—it is rather an episode, a single lovely valley in the precincts of Perugia, which, contrary as it seems to say so, is only half under the dreaming Umbrian spell, and for the rest reserves the right to her own infinite variety.

CHAPTER IV

GUBBIO

A Franciscan legend, not in itself, perhaps, a considerable thing, but a power in Umbria, where even the most world-hardened are apt to go eagerly in search of a bit of poetry or a wisp of make-believe, is what draws people out of their way to Gubbio. It is one of the pleasantest stories in the "*Fioretti*" —the history of St. Francis and the wolf—and it is as satisfying, charming, and ingenuous as a fairy-tale. It appears that the people of Gubbio were sorely harried by a wolf, which stole their sheep and raided their cattle, and finally confined them nervously inside their walls. At length they decided to send for Francis, whose word was the contemporary panacea for all woes, and he agreed to help them. Waiting therefore, half in doubt and half in hope, for him to devise some means of riddance, what must have been their amazement to see him one day calmly plodding into the city with the wolf, the danger and terror of their lives, trotting tamely at his heels. Immediately then, before them all, he set about with his own grave and sweet reasonableness persuading the wolf, which

with all living things he called his brother, against his former unpeaceable way of life, so that finally the sinner, in the engaging description of the legend, "lifted up his paw straight before him and laid it tamely on the hand of Francis, giving such signs of faith as he was capable of." And ever after that, until he died, the wolf dwelt quietly in Gubbio, in the sweet and sanctified odour of repentance,

If it is an ancient and spiritual matter that invites one to Gubbio, it is at least a modern and material affair that actually transports one there, for the means, for the vulgar at least, is that characteristic Italian vehicle, the "*autobus*," a cross between a charabanc and an omnibus, and up to the tricks of both breeds. Leaving Perugia as it does in the early hours of the morning, it is not extensively patronised, and the hardy tourist is likely to rattle about in its horsehair interior like the proverbial pea in a drum. To make the two hours' journey, Jonah-like, in the belly of this creature, crashing and whirling its way without a silencer to its engines and at extravagant speed down precipitous hills and round fantastic corners, is like being incorporated in an advance of Armageddon, but it has its delights. It is something to be privileged to witness the casual and magnificent skill of the driver as he guides his colossus down the curling road to the Tiber bed, where at Ponte

Felcino the bright twisting river is spanned, and up again on the other side of the valley, between wet banks in spring covered with dark grape-hyacinth, and surmounted by little bushy oaks, still brown with the winter's unfallen leaves. Farther up still you roar into the region of morning mist, into an area too high for trees and covered only with short, bleak grass, and then descending a little you run along a ridge in a wide and glorious landscape of hills, broad and colourful and generous as Umbrian hills know how to be. One more descent and traversal of a valley, and Gubbio comes into sight at the foot of the next range, lying against the first fold of Monte Igino, a great, blunt, frowning hill a little like Monte Subasio, only barer and less kind.

Gubbio is not in the least like any other Umbrian town. There is in the first place something almost forbidding and desolate about it, which is unexpected even in a moribund city; and secondly its main lines are horizontal and not, as in practically every other instance, perpendicular. There are three or four streets running parallel above and below each other on the hillside, but the roofs stretch so far to right and left that they give it all an elongated and pressed-out air. One takes in at first glance the grand ravine between the city's own hill and its neighbour, the great Palazzo dei Consoli springing out square and high and aggressive from

among the surrounding buildings, the splendid line of cypresses marching in a solemn diagonal across the hill above the city, and the church, cut off by a great space of hillside from human dwellings, that crowns the top.

Even on a spring morning Gubbio has something a little tragical in its aspect. It is so gaunt and depopulated and unable to fill its own boundaries. To Englishmen, habituated to deplore, sincerely or otherwise, overcrowding, the expansion of hamlets into towns, and the eating up of the countryside by bricks and mortar, there is something pathetically incomprehensible about a population dwindled to a handful inside its city walls. Not that the place is more than usually poverty-stricken, or in particular disrepair, but life in it seems to have become shrunken and almost suspended.

From the size of the buildings and the extent of the town it is easy to believe that Gubbio was once comparatively large and important. This its history amply bears out; but its palmiest days were early, and it was as long ago as the middle of the twelfth century that Gubbio celebrated her great day, when, under the leadership of Ubaldo, warrior and saint, she received the homage of no less than eleven neighbouring cities. Every now and then, patrolling the desolate streets, one is reminded of her early splendours, most often in passing some old

palazzo, defaced outside and certainly dismantled within, but magnificent still by reason of its size, its massive stonework, its great pointed windows and wide eaves. One of these palaces, in Gubbio's happy days, belonged to the family of the Accoramboni—"Corombona" Webster called them—and it was here that Vittoria was born and lived, whose fearful story, half-recalled and half-imagined in the tragedy of the "White Devil," seems appropriate to-day to the fierce and mournful aspect of her birthplace.

The great market-place in the lowest Piazza, a curious hollow pillared building, was evidently intended to hold more merchandise than the few wretched barrowloads that supply the needs of the present population; and S. Francesco, on the opposite side of the square, was built for more worshippers than frequent it to-day. From the outside, at least, it is rather a fine church, of a tall, quiet pattern, not very common in Italy, and the straight Gothic lines of its apse call to mind the plain and stately Cathedral of Arezzo.

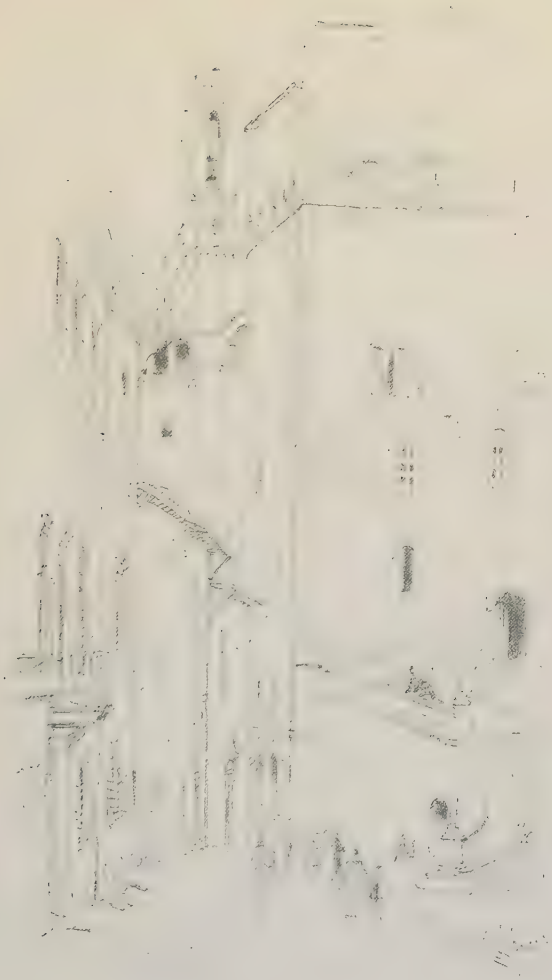
The Palazzo dei Consoli, towering up as it does above the rest of the city, calls more insistently than anything else for immediate inspection. It is a domineering building, at first more impressive than beautiful, from below seeming to tower storeys and storeys high because of the huge uncovered

foundations that upbear it on the outer side of the hill. These foundations are in the shape of great round vaults, but the rest of the palace is uncompromisingly square in shape, with a squarely embattlemented roof surmounting an arched loggia, and at one corner a slim rectangular tower, rather disproportionately slight for the general bulk. Apart from the Eugubines, the Palazzo dei Consoli hardly inspires affection in the beholder, but rather surprise at its mightiness and a profound respect. It is the convincing testimony of Gubbio's departed greatness, and a very magnificent landmark in her present decay.

The entrance is in the Piazza della Signoria, which, looked at from below, seems at about the third storey above ground-level, but is actually on the ground floor. The Piazza is a long, paved strip, like a great stone verandah, bounded on three sides by buildings (on the second and third by the municipal residence, and a low and not very interesting modern palace) and on the fourth side open to the wide and splendid view—the usual illimitable Umbrian landscape of hills and plain, traversed by twisting roads. From the high and airy loggia of the Palazzo is a more magnificent edition of the same view, taking in another range of the hills and a broader sweep of the plain.

Inside, the Palazzo lodges most of what Gubbio

boasts in the way of art treasures, which are neither very important nor very numerous. The first great chilly and handsome room on the ground floor is sparsely furnished with sculpture, eked out by the inevitable Roman sarcophagi, approached by a steep and curious stairway, and there is a gallery above with Umbrian pictures of middling interest and merit, some old furniture, and a collection of ancient and modern pottery. The museum has, however, one curious and mysterious treasure in the shape of seven tablets of bronze, known to archæology as the Eugubine Tablets, which belong to a very early world indeed. They were discovered in the fifteenth century near the Umbro-Roman theatre that lies at the bottom of the hill, and whose green tiers are visible from outside the palace doors; and for a long time their meaning baffled conjecture. They are inscribed in two different kinds of writing, the five smaller bearing Etruscan and the two larger Latin characters. When, not so very long ago, interest was revived in Etruscan studies, it was thought that the Latin characters on the two tablets were the translation of the Etruscan characters on the five, and there was a burst of hope that the impenetrable mystery of the Etruscan tongue was on the way towards solution. It was discovered, however, that the inscriptions had not been translated from one set of tablets to the other, but



PALAZZO DEI CONSOLI AND PALAZZO PRETORIO, GUBBIO

merely transliterated, and that the language of them both was neither Etruscan nor Latin, but Umbrian, which appears to be a very old Italian dialect akin to Latin. So that although the meaning of the inscriptions could be fairly accurately surmised—they are a formula of prayer and ritual observed by the hierarchic forebears Arval Brethren —the key to the Etruscan language is still unfound. The explanation of Etruscan characters being in use in a city that is not known at any time to have been in Etruscan occupation is that the Etruscans taught the Umbrians to write, and that although the tablets (which are probably copies of older ones) were inscribed as late as the second century B.C., it was natural that the inscriptions, being religious, should be preserved in the most traditional and archaic form. In appearance the tablets are very beautiful, being small and easy to handle—the three lesser ones are only about a foot wide and twenty inches high—with the letters well and carefully cut by a practised hand.

From around and under the Piazza step away the characteristic streets of a hill town, steep, stone-paved, with their entrances most often framed in arches, which gives them the appearance of little architectural arcades, and the roofs dropping one after another down the hillside to form a kind of giant's overhead stairway. Above the Piazza the

streets are less urbane, and rapidly develop the character of flinty paths broken into rough steps and much overgrown with greenery. One of these climbing paths leads you between the surprisingly modest and unsuspected entrances of two of Gubbio's ancient splendors, the Cathedral and "La Corte," the second-best palace of Federigo Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, that dark and splendid captain with a nose even more hawk-like than Wellington's, who has one unforgettable likeness, painted by Piero della Francesca, in the Uffizi, and another in marble in the Bargello. Federigo had been born in Gubbio, which in the fourteenth century had passed into the hands of the Dukes of Urbino, and he greatly loved the place. So, too, did his second wife Battista, and as the Feltreschi were extremely popular in the city, he set about building a palace there for his duchess, with a courtyard exactly copied from the one at Urbino, so that she might feel herself at home. It was, however, in the days of their son Guidubaldo that "La Corte" attained its greatest fame, for it was from the court held there by him and his wife Elisabetta Gonzaga that Castiglione drew his inspiration for the famous *Cortigiano*, that book of "The Courtier" which in its day was esteemed all over Europe the perfect precept of gentle and knightly behaviour.

Except for a caretaker, the place is now uninhabited, and stands completely bare and dismantled. But it is worth a visit, if only for the sake of seeing that splendid dining or reception room, with its two magnificent chimney-pieces, their carved stone hoods still faintly decorated in blue and gold like the stone cornices over the windows, which give out across the roof-tops on the wide and rolling view. There the Duke and Duchess used to entertain, and there, from Castiglione's picture, we see them happily unrestrained among their friends, discussing in semi-platonic dialogue the natures of knights and of ladies, and how a noble A or a noble B should act in certain given circumstances.

The Cathedral, like "La Corte," is close as the grave, and is perhaps hardly worth unsealing, although once you have roused the custodian of the palace, she is not likely to do her friend across the way out of the chance of a tip by failing to pass you over into his hands. You are admitted at a side door, a long way away from the main entrance, and to reach the Cathedral itself are led through a maze of passages and little rooms—through all those precincts of a church that are usually "off," and give the layman an apologetic feeling of intrusion. Inside, the Cathedral is of pleasant shape and pattern, and except for two fairly good pictures over the altars on the left, of

little interest. In the sacristy is its best treasure, laid bare after innumerable unlockings and twistings of keys—a brocaded vestment, wonderfully and beautifully worked in gold and pale shining colours. The Cathedral is on the whole one of those excursions in which one wishes that the custodian were a little less conscientious in doing the dreary honours of his task.

Outside the topmost city gate, on the wide hillside, one can breathe fully and gloriously. A misty day in spring is the perfect time for it, when the hills opposite look great and dark and a little mysterious, when Monte Igino itself is wet and fragrant with sodden leaves, and here and there from among the spiky bushes of gorse springs a tree of shy white blossom, the lightest note in a green and grey and silver scale that tones from cypresses to grass, to olives and smoke-grey mist. A little way up the hill—a mountain hermitage, but not too remote from the world—is the shrine of S. Ubaldo, a retreat to which one could fancy even a temperament less ascetic than that of a medieval saint would betake itself with joy. There is something particularly appealing about Ubaldo, because he did not insist in cutting himself off from affairs, and with a spirit something in advance of his times, deplored those ostentatious extremities of self-denial and self-humiliation which were customarily

regarded as signs of holiness. The white slab besides his shrine, which catches the eye from the bottom of the hill, reveals on closer inspection an inscription of three lines of the *Paradiso*, where Dante referred to it as the hill chosen by the blessed saint, and is an example of that pleasant modern Italian habit of marking the poet's tracks, or the tracks of his thoughts, with his verses.

At the very top of the hill, among the cypresses, is the church of the saint's name, which yearly, on May 15th, is linked and brought into communication with the city, on the anniversary of the festival of the *Ceri*. This festival, called the Procession of the *Ceri*, is, like the Eugubine tablets, another of Gubbio's private and mysterious possessions; though it is not, in actual fact, a procession, in any natural or dignified connotation of the word, but a kind of semi-religious, semi-athletic rout, as inalienable from Gubbio as the *Palio* is from Siena, and considerably more mysterious in its origins.

Like the *Palio* at Siena, and unlike the *Giuoco del Ponte* at Pisa, it has survived triumphant, and the day is celebrated in modern times with as much enthusiasm as ever. May 15th is the vigil of Ubaldo's feast, and it is to his glory that the whole entertainment redounds, so that the day is usually considered to have been instituted in his honour; although some authorities, with a deeper taste for

antiquity still, father its inception on to the unaccountable Etruscans, and constrain it and the impenetrable tablets into providing each other with a reciprocal elucidation.

Whatever its origin, the actual celebration is a rare entertainment. The *Ceri* are three curious great erections like double Japanese lanterns, standing about eighteen feet high and mounted on heavy wooden shafts in the manner of a sedan chair. They are the property respectively of three guilds: the *Muratori* (masons), the *Contadini* (farmers), and the *Commercianti* (business men); and each *Cero* is crowned by a little image of the guild's patron saint: S. Antonio, dressed in a red cloak for the *Contadini*; S. Giorgio, mounted and brave in blue for the *Commercianti*; and S. Ubaldo himself for the *Muratori*, wearing his bishop's mitre and a gold cope, and with two tiny waxen fingers stretched out in blessing. The business of the day is to bear the *Ceri*, which on May 15th come down to Gubbio for their single annual holiday, back home again to S. Ubaldo's church at the greatest possible speed, and forty bearers are provided from each guild for the purpose.

On the face of it, it sounds unexciting, but the circumstances are to be considered. Carrying the *Ceri* at all is no easy matter, for they are very heavy, immensely high and vastly unstable, and

have to be borne by two rows of men who place their shoulders under the shafts—in itself quite a difficult piece of team-work. But the object is not merely to carry them, but to race them up a rough and cruelly steep hillside—quite a climb, on a day cooler than an Italian May 15th, for a person going unencumbered and at a normal pace. The bearers of the *Ceri* work in relays, in short and furious charges, but the burden never stops. It is miraculously transferred in full flight from one set of shoulders to another, fresh men shoving in turn under the bars in place of their bursting comrades, whose business it is, the moment they are relieved, to charge perpendicularly up the face of the hill, so as to be ready for the convoy at the next lap of the zigzag path. An ordinary pedestrian takes about three-quarters of an hour to climb the hill; the average time for the procession is from sixteen to twenty minutes. The whole performance is one of those heroic and passionate feats of strength and endurance in which the Italians are such specialists.

Although the race is not run until five or six in the evening, when the worst of the sun's fury is abated, the *Ceri* and their supporters make an early appearance, and on their festival the desolate face of the city is changed as if by magic. Every woman and child in it has new clothes, and is abroad in them, and every available flag and decoration

in the town is hung about the streets, which are brightened again at a lower level by oranges and cherries and rainbow-coloured sweets. The *Ceri* men, elegant in white, are naturally the heroes of the occasion, and in the intervals of being feted and filled with wine (which happens formally and at public expense twice during the day in the town hall) they make short trial trips and charges with their burdens, and with what seems a crazy prodigality of energy they execute wild figures called *girate*, in which the great creatures are made to whirl and bob at certain places in token of a salute.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, a procession, definitely religious in character and bearing a life-size image of S. Ubaldo, makes a tour of the city ; then, like a signal for the final stage of the excitement to begin, the huge bell in the tower of the Palazo dei Consoli begins to toll with a heart-shaking clamour, and the crowd to gather in suffocating groups at different corners, waiting for the *Ceri* to make their formal appearance. The course for the procession proper is from the topmost city gate to S. Ubaldo's church, but this is only the second half of the performance. The curtain goes up, as it were, on a terrific babel approaching out of a side street, where the *Ceri* have been lying up in preparation ; then, preceded by a shouting, racing

CORSO GARIBALDI, GUBBIO

crowd led by two mad little sheriff-like men mounted on foaming ponies and waving swords to clear the way, the great creatures are borne at a rush into the limelight in the lowest square of the city. Here they make three formal *girate*, then are rushed up to the Piazza della Signoria, where they are received by the Sindaco and make another three. Then after a bumper of wine they make their way to the topmost gate, and having been rushed almost horizontally under its low arch, they pause for a minute and then start on their wild and difficult path.

Watching from the bottom one forgets the panting crowds that bear them and the followers gasping in their wake, and thinks only of three little saints on top of their *Ceri*, plodding swiftly one behind the other up the steep zigzags of the path. Bit by bit, moving with an almost mechanical quick steadiness, they become very high and small and almost indistinguishable, and the colours of their cloaks, by which one knows them, are lost against the dark hillside. Only the little cope of S. Ubaldo shows bravely golden till the last, with the sun catching it as it swings round the topmost bend of the path. It halts for a second, an infinitesimal yellow dot, while the bearers thunder for admittance on the door of the church, and when it vanishes the day is over.

Then attention drops from the hill-top to the unaccustomed bustle of cars and carts stirring in the lowest Piazza ; in a twinkling the strangers and visitors mount and are packed in, and whirling away to supper they leave Gubbio to the three hundred and sixty-four days of her twilight existence.

Gubbio had once, as well as two mysteries, a considerable artistic reputation of her own, the foundations of which are not to-day very evident. Dante, mentioning in the *Purgatorio*, perhaps quite casually, a certain Oderisio, a miniature painter, as *l'onor di Agobbio* (the glory of Gubbio), has endowed that very early artist with an important reputation which it is difficult either to affirm or to deny, since there is no authentic work by his hand now in existence. The personalities of three painters of the family of Nelli are, however, more solidly established, and Gubbio's chief art treasure, a certain fresco called the Madonna del Belvedere, is by the hand of Ottaviano, one of the brothers. It is on the wall of the church of S. Maria Nuova, and is thoughtfully covered with glass and preserved with the utmost care. It is rather a charming thing, delicate and decorative and most unrealistic, showing a fair-haired and unearthly Madonna and Child, enchanted by music from the lutes of blonde little fairylike angels and surrounded by adoring saints. It is not by any means a masterpiece, but

shows up well in a city poorly off for pictures, and is a blessing (in the shape of tourists' tips) to the family that holds the key of the church. Perhaps the most deservedly remembered of all Gubbio's artists is Giorgio Andreoli, the potter—Mastro Giorgio as he was called—who either invented or rediscovered that rich deep-red glaze which is one of the characteristic colours of the pottery known as Gubbio ware. The majolica industry, which has always been one of the chief native arts, has lately been revived, and a small factory established which turns out a rapid and artistic supply of hand-made and hand-painted pots. It is the greatest relief to find one busy and businesslike establishment in that nearly-dead city, and to have a sign that by this means it may possibly one day be restored to life. The industry, newly resuscitated as it is, is already flourishing, and possessed of "gold medals," which are shown in effigy, along with the other attractions, by the enterprising steward. From the workshop jugs and bowls and platters are already going overseas, and old ware out of the museum is being faithfully copied and the reproductions faithfully cracked and resoldered and artificially dimmed into a semblance of the antiquity that seems to the New World the one essential attribute of an art treasure.

It must, however be admitted that in beautifying

the Umbro-Roman theatre, which is perhaps the loveliest thing in the whole excursion, age has played more than a trifling part. A Roman theatre was probably attractive enough when it was new, with the sweeping, semicircular tiers of the auditorium open to the sky, but as a relic it is irresistible, and the example at Gubbio, lying serene in the green fields is particularly perfect of its kind. The superiority of theatres over other ancient remains is that, as the tendency of the auditorium at least was to descend into the earth and not rear above it, it had a fair chance of escaping annihilation at the hands of the destroying hordes; and although little will be left standing of the buildings that were the green-room and wings, the stage itself and the stone benches are likely to be left intact. Gubbio, as it happens, was not a sunk theatre, but it is none the less very happily preserved, and it would be difficult to imagine anything more beautiful than the level greensward of the stage, and the circling tiers of seats of which no chink of stone is visible under the thick bright covering of grass. It is the ideal place for a bivouac, especially if the season is Spring, and the sun warm enough to bring out the first lizard to match his green back against the moss of a great fallen block of masonry, but not too hot to have shrivelled the violets that grow in a prodigal

plenty among the stones, and tinge the whole air with the suggestion of their exquisite and fruity scent.

Once you have taken your place in the auditorium, the stage is likely to be filled by a company of strolling players, recruited from the inexhaustible stream of urchins that flows from the neighbouring cottages. Their repertory, in the early Roman fashion, is less highbrow than rough-and-tumble; somersaults are the backbone of the performance, and their star turn is a kind of sausageless harlequinade. Like all the "profession" they like publicity, and arrange themselves in one clump after another, demanding that you should take their photographs. They are amazingly impudent and very attractive, with their bare legs and arms, sharp and merry faces, their fists closed over little bright bunches of violets and marigolds soon to be thrust upon you in exchange for coin, and their mouths filled with lively and eloquent speech. For this sylvan and unrehearsed performance, not, on the whole, a bad caste.

CHAPTER V

ASSISI

It is a curious, sometimes even a saddening experience, to make acquaintance with a place that has long been familiar through hearsay and in imagination. It is not that one is disappointed—no unknown place, however long and intimately visualised, was ever so clear to the mind's eye that the ideal could be compared with the real in terms of bricks and mortar, and the real be discovered to have fallen short. It is rather that, so long as a thing remains in the fancy it is endowed not only with its natural charms, but with the added beauty of being fantastical, and once it becomes concrete it must put that beauty off.

The fancy is lord of all senses and dimensions, and will apprehend a thing just as generally as it pleases. In the name of a town, for instance, it can evoke streets and houses, sound, colour, movement, people, and an infinite variety of thoughts and associations blended together to make a single image; whereas to see a thing for the first time is to apprehend it particularly, and only through the eyes. There may not be a disap-

pointment; there is a discrepancy. One image is nebulous but entire, the other clear-cut and limited to a single aspect.

One can image an American coming to visit Stratford-on-Avon. Until he had seen it, he would not be able to prevent his fancy, at the thought "Stratford," from showing him the place itself, some remote and dreaming Shakespeare, Elizabethan England, the Old Globe Theatre, Lear and Anthony, Illyria and the Forest of Arden. And when he saw the village, even when he stood on the threshold of Anne Hathaway's cottage, something like a sob might rise in his throat. It would not be sorrow, it would not even be disappointment, but the pain of Stratford putting off forever the beauty of being fantastical.

And yet to see things with the eyes is not a tragedy. It is, when all is said and done, the only way of seeing them. Only, in the case of a city long familiar to the fancy, a reconciliation has to be accomplished between the actual and the ideal, between the substances of wood and stone and the shadows of associations and ideas. It is a slower business getting to know a familiar place than one which is a stranger to the imagination as well as to the eyes; but once the adjustment between the real and the imaginary has taken place, a picture so complete, vital, and ineffaceable

is planted in the mind as to remain with it forever and undimmed.

All this is, perhaps, as pertinent to Assisi as to any place in the world. No city could be imagined more familiar in its associations, no city could be approached with a greater reluctance to destroy its aura of history and legend by the contemplation of its reality, and no city could more fully repay the adjustment between reality and the ideal.

It happens, however, in Assisi, that the adjustment is neither difficult nor unnatural, for it is actually by reason of her history and legend—by Franciscan history and Franciscan legend, that is—that she survives. Nothing in Assisi has succeeded to St. Francis. It is his name that has made the place familiar in the minds of half the earth, and it is his cult that has kept it in existence. The town has effaced its personality before his, and is not distinct from him, and the cult of her saint is, it can be said without irreverence, Assisi's collective industry and profession. And Francis the Saint and Francis the profession of the populace are what finally survives in the memory as an abiding impression of Assisi.

Naturally, however, the town did not spring into being as his background, and before his birth was already set and established in a tradition which did

S. PIETRO, FROM PORTA S. FRANCESCO, ASSISI

not alter with his coming at the end of the twelfth century. What the advent of Francis did was to give rise to a sacred stream of history, which flowed parallel with the secular until the latter came to an end, virtually speaking, with the end of the Umbrian Communes, and then was left to continue alone, as it has done until to-day.

As far as secular history is concerned, Assisi's most strongly marked characteristic was her antagonism to Perugia, which was established early and survived late. The feud had its beginning in pre-Roman days, when Assisi, with no attractions of positions for the Etruscans, had been left in the hands of the Umbrians, and the invaders had established themselves on the hill-top across the plain. The disagreements of those days were naturally in abeyance during the centuries of Roman occupation. Then Assisi, curiously enough, had a great glory of buildings and theatres, all of which, with the exception of a single temple, disappeared in the barbarian invasions; and she gave to Rome the Latin poet Propertius, who added his sighings of love for Cynthia to the lyric literature of the world. In the Middle Ages, amid the wars of popes and emperors, Assisi, being off a main track, was for some time left to herself. During her seclusion she built a splendid castle, whose remains still grandly crown her bare hill; and this was later the

cause of her being drawn again into affairs, as the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa fancied it as a stronghold, and he and his family used it often when they were in Italy. Thus Assisi, whether she liked it or not, was definitely stamped, by the Emperor's condescension, with the Ghibelline seal, and continued in that camp. There is a story that Frederick II, the Emperor, and grandson of Barbarossa, was born in Assisi, although the Assisans, contrary to the practice of Italian small towns, take no credit for the event. Probably it has been decided that he is not a native to boast of in the same breath with St. Francis. The story further says that Frederick was born in the square outside the Cathedral, in a tent hastily erected for that purpose. One is tempted to say of him that his choice of a site and circumstances for birth were of a piece with most of his conduct, and that to associate himself with the home of her most popular saint was the kind of trick he would have chosen to play on the Church whose excommunication he bore so lightly in later life. He was an unruly and romantic spirit, and in spite of his high-handed conduct in Italy, in the end cherished some hope of reconciliation with the Church, and was continually promising to go on a crusade to establish it. However, he delayed so long in setting off that the Pope was obliged to excom-

municate him to show who, at least spiritually, was master; and it only confused the situation when Frederick finally went off, unblessed, to fight for the Cross, and conducted a remarkably successful holy war in the East. Directly and indirectly his splendid and irreverent personality crosses the history of Assisi several times in his lifetime.

Under the patronage of the Suabians Assisi would have continued to be safe, but the last of them, Corradino, died in 1268, and Perugia saw her way clear for attack. Perugia was of course strongly and righteously Guelf, so that the old party pretext might have been an excuse for war, but she was even more particularly possessed with the need of clearing all obstacles to the hegemony of Umbria out of her path, and Assisi was one of these. It is a curious fact, and says much for the fighting spirit of Assisi, that she was not extinguished by her powerful neighbour across the way. The struggle was a kind of more-than-hundred-years' war in which Assisi was practically never successful, but on the other hand was never so completely crushed as not to be able after an interval to resume her part. St. Francis comes into the struggle, of course, but in a vastly unspiritiual way that throws some light on the workings of the medieval mind. One of the greatest ambitions of the Perugians was always to get possession of his body. They had not

listened to his word while he lived, but they had not the least doubt that miracles would be performed at his tomb wherever he might lie, and that the body would bring great glory to the city that possessed it. Naturally the body of St. Francis was what Assisi would defend with her life's blood, but she was so often on the vanquished side that it is likely that if the whereabouts of the relic had been exactly known, it would have changed hands in some of Perugia's victories. Through this holy bone of contention a dash of the crusading flavour was imported into wars that would, in any case, have taken place. Curious things occurred. On one occasion in 1321 a patriot persuaded the Assisans to despoil S. Franceso, the saint's great shrine, in order to provide armaments for his defence. The Pope, however, refused to see the action in any other light than that of sacrilege, and promptly put the whole city under an interdict for her pains. In the end the laying of hands on holy treasure turned out as unlucky for Assisi as it has always done in the course of history, for she was so badly beaten that she was forced to pay tribute to the Guelf party, and for several years groaned under the Perugian yoke.

In 1367 she entered upon a new phase, by falling, with rejoicing, into the hands of Cardinal Albornoz, that intriguing and campaigning emissary

of the Pope. She found, however, direct Papal domination as little to her taste as direct Perugian, and having shaken free of it, embarked next upon a quite unsuccessful attempt at governing herself. In 1442, having been forsaken by her allies the Sforza and still crazily inimical to the Perugians, she suffered one of the worst catastrophes of that protracted war, and narrowly escaped being reduced to ashes. She was taken and sacked utterly, and her inhabitants were sold as slaves and driven across the valley with the booty and the cattle. Only the intervention of the Pope saved her from annihilation. As soon as she recovered a little, civil feuds between the families of the Nepi and the Fiumi shook the city. The Baglioni were allies of the Nepi, and coming to their aid, again, after another ghastly siege, the Perugians took the town. However, when in 1500 by a mighty plot the Baglioni family was practically destroyed, Assisi fell finally into the hands of the Pope. Her last entreaty, mercifully granted, was that she should be governed separately from Perugia.

This, then, is the sum of Assisi's history, a tale not very different after all from that of Todi or of Gubbio, and one which properly belongs to a little grey, dead city, very similar, in outward appearances at least, to Todi and to Gubbio and the rest of those tumble-down stone villages that lie on the

hills of Umbria and possess the proud and blood-stained histories of city-states. But there the resemblance ends, for Assisi, for centuries dead as a city, has now an immortal existence as the shrine of that personality which is likely to remain with men as long as Christianity is a power in the world. The stream of those who are to be numbered as travellers to Assisi stretches as far forward into the future as it does back into the past—faithful and curious and idle, they come and will come in thousands to follow the footsteps of Francis through the streets of his native town.

It is, perhaps, a kind of presumption to repeat in a few words the story of one of the greatest figures of the Middle Ages, and one of the purest and most Christ-like priests in the history of Christianity; and yet the story, if it is to be told without comment and digression, can be put down in a few words, and moreover is best retold with the simplicity that characterised its subject from first to last.

Francis Bernardone was the son of Pietro, a rich merchant of Assisi, and was born in the year 1182. He was brought up, as was natural, in the Roman Catholic faith, but passed his youth as did the sons of other rich men of his day, which was, perhaps, in a more extravagant and light-hearted way than that followed by the heirs of fortunes in other

times and ages. It was the custom then for young men to form themselves into companies, like magnificent clubs, for feasting and entertainment and the toasting of loves, and of those *Brigate Amorose*, as they were called, Assisi had her share. Francis, who from his earliest days was conspicuous for his merriment and for his jovial, magnetic and care-free nature, was one of the best-loved of all the boon companions of Assisi, and was many a time at their feasts crowned king. Like the rest of his companions, and like all gentlemen of his day, he was ready to answer the call to arms when it sounded, and his first campaign was not unnaturally fought in a war against Perugia in 1202, when he had the misfortune to be taken prisoner. He lay with his companions for a year in a Perugian dungeon, and the story is that he danced for them there in prison to save them from despair. When finally he was brought back to Assisi, he was ill of a fever, and lay weak and helpless in his house for a long time. It was then, as was natural, that the first serious and disquieting thoughts took possession of his mind; but once he was restored to health his fancy turned again to fighting, pursuing that military dream which, perhaps because he had been bred to trade and not to tourneys, was so dear and lively to him. In spite of the painful and unromantic experiences of his first campaign

he enrolled himself again, this time to fight in a war in Apulia, and set off boasting of a return covered with glory and renown. He had got as far as Spoleto on his way to join his captain when he had a return of his fever, and as he lay there chafing at the delay the serious thoughts of his past illness returned to him more insistently than before, accompanied this time by a voice that demanded why he forsook the Master to follow the servant, and bade him lay down his arms and return home. To obey was the first great act of courage that signalised Francis' conversion, although he hardly knew as yet what was his intention in turning his face from the fight. The angry disappointment of his father and the mockery of his companions he bore with a serene patience, and suddenly found an unimagined work for his hands in tending the sick and the lepers, a task which lately would have seemed impossible to his proud and fastidious youth. But he was still plunged in the deepest cogitation and perplexity. He might, under divine guidance, lay down his arms, but the problem of how else he was to serve was not yet made plain to him. It was while he was attending Mass at the Portiuncula, that little Benedictine chapel that stood at a distance of a mile or so from Assisi in the plain, that he received a sudden revelation of how he was to spend his life—how, taking neither

staff nor scrip, he was to go into the world preaching the Kingdom of Heaven. He went back to his work among the lepers, but now consumed and uplifted by this new purpose. He was an object of loathing to his father, and at first of contumely to the citizens; for interpreting in its final literalness the injunction of poverty, he was seen in his former haunts half-starved, clad in a single garment and begging his bread, devoted entirely to the care of the sick and unclean. But his new way of life was not one that could be dismissed by his fellow-citizens with mere laughter and scorn, for day after day his example confronted them, and time after time they met him pursuing these new duties. Also, however much he might have changed spiritually, his nature was the same as ever; in poverty, as in worldliness, he still had the same magnetism for those with whom he came in contact. In a surprisingly short space of time three disciples joined him and adopted exactly his way of life. They were three men of widely different education and habit of mind—one of his former rich friends, Bernardo di Quintavalle, a canon of the church, Pietro di Catanio, and Egidio, a weaver of baskets. This was the nucleus of his order. In a little while the number of his disciples grew, and he found himself with about twelve followers, who looked towards him with complete obedience and devotion. It now became

clear that he must, for their guidance, give them some definite rule of life, and also that if he was to preach, as he hoped and had received the injunction to do, he must get permission from the Pope, as preaching was at that time the privilege of the bishops only. Therefore, in 1210, he set off with his band for Rome, to ask first for them to be recognised as priests, and second to be allowed to preach freely wherever they went. The pilgrims were received at first doubtfully and without enthusiasm. They seemed poor and travel-stained and insignificant among the glories of Pope Innocent III.'s court, and he was not inclined to listen to them. But the story is that, the night after their audience, the Pope dreamed that famous dream of the Church tottering and being upheld only by the head of that little dusty band. The next day he sent for them again, and told Francis to speak before him. Francis stepped out of his place, hesitating and troubled for a moment; then, in an inspiration of eloquence, he burst forth in the speech that won for his order the recognition of the Pope and the privileges they had come to ask. The Franciscans were established, and set out on their long way rejoicing.

Now follow those years in which Francis and his disciples spread their influence in Umbria, in Italy and in Europe. Through his own wonderful and

inspired preaching, his saint-like personality, and the deep sincerity and devotion of his followers, it increased at amazing speed. The order was perfectly designed for the making of converts, for it was unworldliness incarnate, and nothing could have been more impressive or powerful than the example of the friars, living according to the strictest precepts of poverty and charity, and yet impelled not by discipline but by choice. Francis succeeded as well as any man has ever done in shaking off the world. Such tiny needs as the friars had were satisfied by the gifts of charity, and Poverty, that mystical bride of Francis, was by them magnified into a blessing. Rejoicing and light-heartedness were an injunction of the order, for the founder reckoned it a sin to come before God with a long face. The work of the brothers was preaching, any works of charity or of helping suffering that came to their hands, and finally the manual labour of their own trades (if they had had any), when they had an interval in which to resume them. The Franciscan Order, as we understand it, a great formalised body with its own discipline and machinery, had little enough to do with that first band, who were able to live a life of spontaneous holiness, and be themselves the precedent for the rest of the world. The precedent was, however, unconscious, for the extraordinary simplicity of

their lives and the extraordinary simplicity of their attitude towards life marks them out as performers and not teachers. If their existence was, according to later standards, impracticable or even impossible, it is no matter ; for their spiritual example sufficed, and it is by that that they are to be remembered and judged. There is neither sense nor profit in trying to move Francis out of his own background and attempting to judge him against that of the modern world. He can only be accepted as he was, with his asceticism and his light-heartedness, his serious care for souls, and his warm, overflowing, and most natural love for mankind and birds and beasts and every beauty of nature.

Whether the innumerable stories and legends that have gathered about his life and person are to be equally accepted is another question, and one for private and personal solution. The whole of Umbria is full of them, and in Assisi they literally cluster the way. To all they are matters of interest, to some of importance, to others again of faith—stories such as that of the wolf of Gubbio, the thornless roses of the Portiuncula, the dried-up torrent above the Carceri. But it is not the letter of these miracles that matters. For the one abiding miracle of all great prophets and teachers is their power and influence over mankind—the power over animate things is a greater marvel than the

power over inanimate, and it may be, too, that in some cases the latter is included in the former. There has hardly been a personality in history that has lent himself more easily to legend than did Francis. The extreme simplicity and sincerity of his mind made him act exactly as his heart bid him, without reference to the ordinary conventions (as on that occasion when he preached in the Cathedral "naked except for his breeches" to work out some private penance of his own), so that he laid down a precedent of extravagant actions for himself. Again, he was, by reason of his nature, in closest and lovingest kinship with all the animal world, and here, too, was a copious fountain for legend and romance. Though, indeed, much of the record may be true, for a sermon to birds is more of an idyll than a marvel, and there have been more amazing things in the world than a savage wolf tamed. The crowning miracle of his life, which he suffered and did not perform, can be related only, and not commented upon. It is told in the *Fioretti*, that immortal collection of stories of Francis and the first companions, that in 1224, two years before his death, worn out with the long penance and self-disregard of his life, he went with Brother Leo, one of the dearest of disciples, to meditate and pray on Monte Alvernia, in Tuscany, a remote and beloved retreat. While praying there, removed from his

companion and in an ecstasy, he received on his hands and feet the Stigmata, or marks of the nails of the Cross, and so went for the rest of his life pierced with Christ's own wounds.

Francis died in 1226, worn out by the privations that he had put upon himself, having had less than twenty years to accomplish his work. He had founded not only a religious order for men, but also the sisterhood of Poor Clares, who took their name from St. Clare, his first woman convert and one of the most devoted of them all; and also a third or lay order, which he was inspired to found on one occasion when his preaching had so moved an audience that the entire village that composed it determined to follow him, and Francis devised on the instant this means both of accepting their vows and of preventing a more general than judicious renouncing of the world.

For the last two years of his life he was ill and nearly blind and suffered terribly, and yet to a day in these last years (when in a bad bout of illness he was carried down to S. Damiano, the convent of St. Clare and her nuns) belongs his Canticle of the Sun, that psalm of praise and rejoicing, in which he gives thanks for the earth and its blessings, and which is, its sacred significance apart, one of the loveliest poems in the world.

He died at the Portiuncula, where he had

received his great message and where the brothers had established such poor dwelling and abiding place as they had. He had been brought there at his own request, for it was to him the dearest spot in the whole of Assisi which he so greatly loved.

One fancies that he is remembered on earth much as he would have wished to be—tenderly and nearly always smilingly. He is the *Poverello*, the "little poor man" as he called himself, the "minstrel of God" who was merry in the midst of suffering and of holiness, and who thought it as much a duty to sing as to pray, the preacher inspired with a greater strength and fire than even he understood, and the lover of the sun and stars, birds and flowers, and every beautiful thing that the earth puts forth.

CHAPTER VI

ASSISI

People often pride themselves, and probably with reason, on reading their guide-books after the event. They like, that is, to hold their first commerce directly with a picture or a statue or a building, and not till afterwards have the middlemen stepping in to inform them that it is the work of such and such an artist, and belongs to this or that stage of his development. This is a wise rule as far as concerns extracting, in the first and all-important glance, the vital pleasure from a work of art. But it is difficult to know how far, if at all, it holds good with regard to cities. It would be interesting, if it were possible, to be planted in Assisi a complete and utter stranger to the place, and be open to the impression it made. One wonders if there would really be any kind of emanation from the stones either of Assisi's troubled history, or of her saint, or of that mass of emotion and interest that has been expended on and in the place. It is difficult to say. To anybody that knows its story, there seems to be something unique and special about it that marks it off

S. CHIARA FROM THE ROCCA, ASSISI

unquestionably from the rest of the world ; and yet Goethe, when he visited it, reported only on the perfection of the Roman temple of Minerva, and not one syllable of an impression of the Umbrian prophet or of the presence of the Franciscan spirit. So much, it seems, depends on the eye and on the mind of the beholder.

For us, with all our mental pictures and associations of Assisi tending the same way, it is practically impossible to see anything but Francis in the place. Everything depends from him—the churches and sanctuaries he frequented, and the ones built in memory of him and frequented by his order ; the roads he trod ; the hillside he chose for his hermitage, even the tranquillity of the plain, and the recreated generations of the flowers and birds he so loved ; and equally the train that brings the tourists and pilgrims, the hotels that supply their needs, the shops that furnish them with souvenirs, and the host of beggars that require charity of them, are ascribable, in a sense, to the saint. For though Assisi comes very near to it, no place can live nowadays by memories and emotions alone, and has to help itself a little in other ways.

For those that go to Assisi to recapture the past, the present is wonderfully unobtrusive. The railway is not allowed to blow its smoky breath too near the town, but puts you down about a

mile away in the plain, and as you walk up the straight and gently-sloping white road, you can cast off the modern world. The Portiuncula, or rather S. Maria degli Angeli, the great church that covers it, is near the station, but it is wiser at first to leave it on one side, and make for Assisi itself, lying a cluster of brown roofs and golden walls, on the first slope of dark Monte Subasio, with the great church of S. Francesco, mounted on the splendid arches of its foundations, standing proud and conspicuous on the left of the picture. Half-way up the road is a bronze tablet set in the wall of a house, to mark the spot where, when he was being carried down to the Portiuncula to die, Francis begged his bearers to stop for a moment while he turned his face towards the city and blessed it for the last time. By a happy chance the road turns to the right just under the hill, to enter Assisi secretly round a corner, and the true approach to the city is a strip of rough path, bordered with wild flowers and running between fields of olives, standing in spring knee-high in the young wheat, that looks almost unbelievably vivid and green under the clusters of their grey and silver leaves. You enter under a modest old gateway of rose-coloured stone, from which an empty road climbs in a long diagonal into the quiet heart of the town.

In many ways Assisi is like the other hill cities of its period, only it is quieter, and more beautifully coloured and less steep. One has there less the feeling of climbing endlessly up and down than of going in long and gentle gradients from left to right. Many of the buildings, all the steps that break up the little side-tracks and alleys, the arches that span them and the stones by the way, are of the rose-pink rock of Monte Subasio, which makes the general colour indescribably soft and beautiful. Even among the half-deserted cities of Umbria, Assisi is strangely quiet—there are few passengers in the cobbled streets, little traffic, consisting almost entirely of laden mules and little donkey-drawn carts; shops for the most part are poor and modest, and there is little noise, either from the houses or the Piazza. S. Francesco and its immediate surroundings, which are just a little apart from the rest of the city, are the centre of the tourist and pilgrim life, which is quiet enough, and the Piazza, with its unpretending old public buildings, its Tower of the Podestà and its Palazzo del Popolo, its shops and pigeons and vestiges of a market is where the Assisans themselves foregather. There, too, sandwiched between more modern buildings, is the little temple of Goethe's admiration, with its beautiful Roman portico upborne by six delicate fluted columns,

very perfectly preserved. The link between S. Francesco and the Piazza, the tourist and the indigenous population, is a stream of white and blue needle-work, which makes its way via the little shops from every house and hovel in the town into the traveller's boxes and bags. Every woman of Assisi makes it, and every traveller buys it, with the satisfaction of storing up yet another and a tangible recollection in the linen and embroidery substance of this laborious " Point d'Assise."

It is strange to find that the Cathedral is not in the main square, and it is satisfactory to have a legend at hand to explain its unusual position. S. Rufino was built, it appears, to hold the body of the martyr after whom it is named, and when the question of choosing a site for it arose, a mystic command was laid upon the Assisans to harness two white oxen to the cart bearing the body and start them up the hillside; and where they came to a halt the building was to be begun. But the spot they chose, which the Cathedral now covers, did not please the Assisans, and they began to build higher up. The walls had not mounted very high before the earth under them gave way, and the foundations crumbled. After this lesson it was decided to obey the divine injunction, and S. Rufino rose strong and steady on the spot where it now stands. It is a church of extreme beauty,

very old and brown with time and weather, and with a great square tower rising behind it. There are three fine rose windows in the façade, with a delicate gallery running under them, and three battered old round doors, outlined in quaint and venerable stone carving. It was at this threshold that the Emperor Frederick was born, and it was in the old font that those three fatal children, himself and the saints Francis and Clare were all baptised. The inside of the church has been painfully renovated, and is best left unexplored.

Just below the Cathedral a road runs eastward out of the city through the domain of St. Clare—past her memorial church of S. Chiara, then through the Porta Nuova, down to S. Damiano, where she lived with those first "Poor Clares," her nuns. S. Chiara, like S. Francesco, is the church built to the memory of the saint, and not one of those that she knew in life. It is a long building standing at the edge of the city and looking towards Assisi, and from its Piazza one sees one of the many versions of that wide, magnificent view of the plain that sweeps between the city and Perugia. Like so many of the churches of this part of Umbria, its façade is checked in squares of soft pink and orange-coloured marble, but it has an individual characteristic in the shape of great flying buttresses, which were no part of the original plan, but were added to

save the church from slipping down the treacherous hillside. Inside it is of long and simple Gothic shape, rather barnlike by reason of its great white-washed spaces, but still appealing. S. Chiara's tomb is in the crypt.

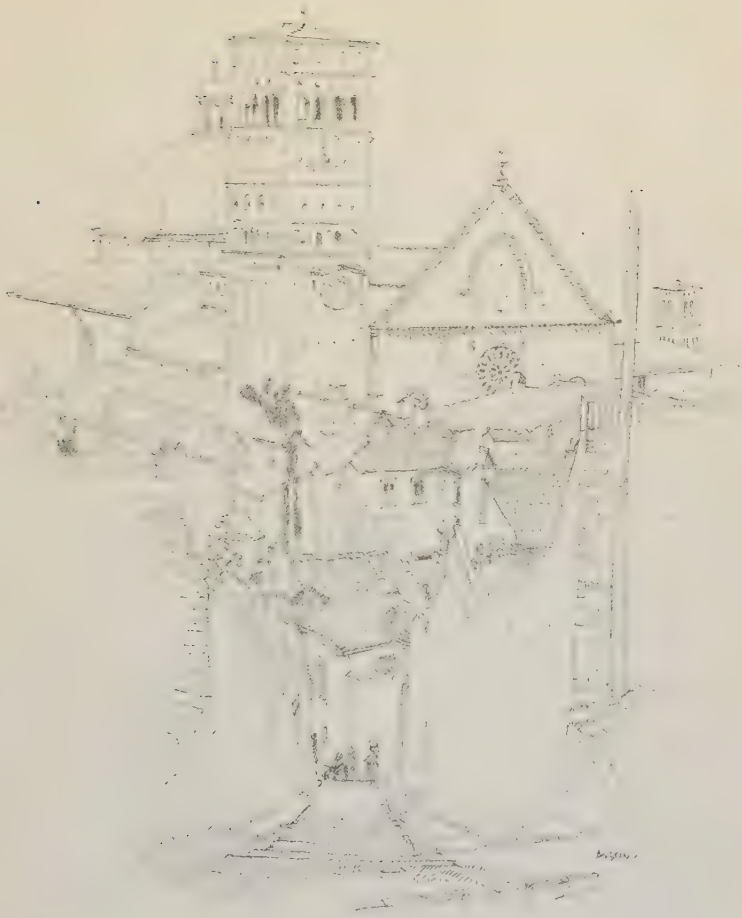
Between the church and the Porta Nuova is one of the pleasantest bits of the town, a strip of tree-planted road running down to the gateway, which frames a distance unimaginably blue. It is a tiny everyday walk, in which, for a moment not unwillingly, one forgets the past. Outside the Porta Nuova the road dips suddenly to where S. Damiano lies in shelter at the bottom of the hill. It is a cluster of low and modest buildings, grouped about an open red-paved courtyard, where stands a statue of St. Clare. It seems almost like a little farm, lying so peacefully among the oliveyards and the country green. The place is twice sanctified, both by Francis and by Clare—and holds a hundred memories. It was here, when only a tumble-down shrine stood in the fields, that Francis used to come and pray, and it was here that he received from Heaven the instruction to "Rebuild My House." Here he established Clare and her first companions, after they had taken their vows, and here all Clare's miracles were performed. It was from a window in the present chapel that she spoke to the Emperor Frederick II's soldiers, and turned them

back from violence when they were threatening Assisi, and it was here that she blessed the bread at the Pope's command when he paid them a visit, and each loaf was immediately marked with the sign of the cross. Here Francis was brought in that bout of sickness and blindness from the midst of which, with a glad voice, he declaimed the Canticle of the Sun, and here his body was carried after his death for Clare to touch through her grating with adoring hands.

Now the nuns have left S. Damiano and brown-frocked monks are in their place. Everything has been preserved of the old buildings, but to make even a small convent the place has had to be repaired and enlarged. At S. Damiano, as at all the churches of Assisi, they are used to visitors, and it is just a little chilling to find how precisely a routine has been prepared for them. A tour of the treasures and holy places is already planned, and a monk at hand ready to describe them with the mechanical fluency born of endless repetition. There is also the signing of a visitors' book to be performed, and a bestowal of souvenirs that too punctually precedes the receipts of alms. It is all inevitable, perhaps, but rather saddening, and one comes out into the sunshine with no impression of having been very near to Francis or to Clare. Loitering back up the hill, however, in that magical

calm of Assisi, in the blue and green and lovely landscape, one slips back into the Franciscan spirit of thankfulness for the most abiding of all blessings. "Praised be my Lord God for all his creatures . . . and specially for our brother the sun, who brings us the day and who brings us the light; fair is he, and shining with a very great splendour. Praised be our Lord God for our brother the wind, and for air and cloud, calms and all weathers."

If, to outward seeming at least, little of the Franciscan spirit is to be found at S. Damiano in the plain, much of it still lingers in the heights, on Monte Subasio, at the hermitage of the Carceri. Of all the sanctuaries and holy places of Assisi, this is the most truly Franciscan, the remotest and the least touched by the world. If there is anywhere in Assisi, where one might fancy Francis could still feel himself at home, it is on the rough path that winds up the mountain-side from the Porta Cappucini. There, once the city is left behind, time can have altered little. The way perhaps is wider to-day and strewn with fresh stones, but the beauty of the hillside must have been renewed unvaryingly from season to season, and from century to century. It is an ascent that might fill hearts even less sensitive than Francis' with prayer and praise for the blessings of the earth. Assisi lies behind, capped by the great ruins of its castle; below,



S. RUFINO, ASSISI

between Subasio and the far hills, sweeps the wide fertile Umbrian plain, utterly flat, and broken by the boundaries of the fields into patches of extraordinarily vivid green; and beyond and above the path itself are the great rounded hills that border it, alternately light and deep black in patches, according as they lie under sunlight or great floating masses of cloud. Parts of the way are literally bordered with violets, and sometimes for whole stretches the air is thick with their scent. That is the landscape in spring and in sunshine. In winter snow most likely covers the path, or the wind blowing off distant white patches cuts like a knife. Then only the brave in spirit make the ascent, and find for their reward that it is warmer on the broad hillside than below among the houses where the wind sweeps the cowards like chaff along the icy stone channels of the streets. In winter as in spring, the pink rock of Monte Subasio, laid bare in patches, makes wonderful colours under the grey-green of the bushes and trees.

The Carceri is withheld from sight until finally one turns the corner of the first fold of the hill, and comes upon a great ilex-wood, spread like a dark cloth in the ravine. The stony path follows the edge of it to the top of the crevice, and from the trees, floats out suddenly, like a welcome, the song of Francis' friends, the birds. The tiny convent

itself is built upon tall foundations that exactly bestride the head of the glen. You might think at first that the place was uninhabited, if it were not for a wisp of smoke curling out of the chimney, and a little carefully-tended plot of snowdrops that surrounds a statue of Francis standing beside the bridge. Most likely, as you wander into the fringe of the dark wood, to be charmed by the birdsong and to wonder at the plenty of the flowers—snowdrops and little star-like squills, grape-hyacinth, cyclamen and feathery wood anemones, you will catch sight of a brown habit among the gloom of the trees, and find a modern hermit bidding you good-day. There, almost at your feet, he will show the tiny caves in the earth that served the first holy men for shelter and sleeping room—he is comically certain which berth belonged to which—and begin to unwind for you the long thread of history and legend that is coiled about the place. It was a beloved retreat to Francis, who needed nothing more there than the shelter of the forest and the tiny caves, and who used to allow the brothers to go there for little spells of rest and refreshment when they needed some respite from their work. The convent buildings were raised by S. Bernardino of Siena, that great Franciscan and preacher of the fifteenth century, who through love of the founder, did much to restore the order to its earliest purity.

Your guide, who lives there with a single other companion, will recapture the Franciscan spirit for you by telling the stories with a merry tongue, and laughing over the hardships of his own life, which are scarcely less rigorous than those of the earliest companions. The convent buildings have covered some of Francis' own personal haunts, but one can still see the rock-bed where he slept, the little stone chapel where he prayed, and outside the particular great tree on which the birds gathered to hear his words, and the dry bed of the stream from which "Sister Water" disappeared when Francis begged her not to interrupt his prayers with her rushing song. The Carceri, above all others, is the place where the border-line between history and legend is not distinct. Up there, especially towards sunset, when the dark and unimaginable stillness of that thick wood is broken only by the calling of birds, and the air is sweet with the scent of earth and innumerable flowers, a tale of saints and angels seems more nearly than a tale of sinners and the world to touch the truth.

* * * * *

Different, indeed, from the Carceri, where birds and flowers and solitude recall the saint, is the great memorial church of S. Francesco, where men laboured with every conscious art and skill to make him a shrine. It is the present glory of Assisi, the

fountain of the Franciscan cult and worship, but it is a thing apart from the other sanctuaries and holy places. They cherish the actual impress of the saint's personality, and are preserved as his tangible points of contact with the world; whereas S. Francesco is the tribute and the handwork of posterity, and reflects the saint not directly, but through the medium of the feeling he inspired in those who had known him or came after him.

The genius of the place is, in a sense, not Francis, but a certain Brother Elias, its builder, one of the earliest of the companions, and the man who, in that simple company, most nearly represented the outside world. He had joined the order in 1211, and belonged to the intellectual rather than to the simple type of religious. Francis had admired his powers greatly, but had distrusted and doubted the strain of sophistication which Elias could not lose. His fears were well founded, for it was Elias who was destined to bring the first disagreements and dissensions into the order.

When Francis died in 1226, and when, only two years later, the Pope, convinced of the miracle of the Stigmata, ordained his canonisation, the question at once arose of building a fitting monument to be his tomb. To a few of the companions, notably to Brother Leo and his friends, who had perhaps been dearest of all to Francis, the idea of commemorating

their master by any kind of splendour and magnificence was abhorrent; but Elias, who had already formed his own following within the order, seized eagerly upon the idea, and in a little while he was entrusted by the Pope with the care of the building. In Italy, too, and beyond it, there was a strong desire to raise a great monument to the saint, and when an appeal was published for funds, it was answered even from the farthest corners of Christendom. Contributions rained in, and the Assisans who could not give money, gave their labour without hire. But while Italy was rejoicing at so proudly remembering her last great prophet, it seemed to the closest of his disciples, that in this pomp and display he was already forgotten. Leo and his friends felt so bitterly and sorrowfully about it, that they even went so far one day as to break the marble vase that had been put for the contributions beside the unfinished building. But the walls of S. Francesco continued to rise, and in a little while the church was ready for the reception of the saint's body, which had lain meanwhile in the church of S. Giorgio. On the day of its translation, all Assisi and every stranger that could make his way into the city turned out as for a feast. A solemn and magnificent procession was formed, and all along the route flowers were flung down upon the ox-drawn waggon on which the

body lay. A group of soldiers, however, kept all the time close beside it, for Elias knew the value of the treasure he was transporting, and would not have been surprised to see the Perugians or other enemies bear down upon it and make an attempt to carry it off. When the procession reached the church door an amazing thing occurred. The soldiers, closing round the body, lifted it in a moment from off the waggon and hurried it into the church, locking the doors in the faces of the astonished people; and while they, realising that they were to be cheated of their spectacle, hammered and shouted without, a swift and secret ceremony of burial was performed, deep in the foundations of the building. Francis was indeed sealed in the tomb that had been prepared for him, and so safely and thoroughly buried that for centuries the exact spot where he rested was unknown. It was not discovered until the nineteenth century, when a new crypt and two staircases leading down from the lower church were built to make it accessible; but meanwhile, in all those years, a legend had grown up about the hidden tomb. It was said that Francis was not buried beneath S. Francesco, but arisen; and that men had seen him walking there, and had heard heavenly music in a church founded below the other two. In death, as in life, the halo of mystery and wonder still clung about him.

Brother Elias, who had supervised the building of the monument and been responsible for the strange scene of its dedication, passed from the obscurity of holiness into the lime-light of a chequered career. He had considered himself the rightful head of the order in succession to Francis, and to the horror of the Brothers, at their chapter had supported his claim with violence. Later he had been elected as Vicar-General, and in that capacity had been sent on an embassy to Frederick II. He and the Emperor immediately formed a great friendship, and in a subsequent storm Elias sought refuge at the imperial court. For this he was excommunicated, and having been pardoned later, was excommunicated again, to be finally absolved just before his death. Little of the Franciscan spirit seems to have been native to him, and what was acquired soon fell away after the direct influence of Francis was removed.

The church itself of S. Francesco is so old and venerable, so steeped in prayer and holiness that one forgets that a spirit not Francis' own inspired its building. Seen from far off, where it towers up against the green Hill of Paradise mounted on the great arches of its foundations, or seen from near by, where it stands a little remote from the city, its clean lines and golden colours showing clear against the sky, it is a thing of extraordinary

beauty. It cannot be assigned definitely to this or that period, for, like many of the most lovable buildings in the world, it is a combination of several minds and ages. The core of the building, with the upper and lower churches and the great square tower that flanks them, were the original conception, which was completed in 1228; but since then have been added all the monastery buildings, the elaborate lower doorway and its portico, the curious little domed-crowned loggia of the upper storey, the long, irregular and most beautiful courtyard or cloister below, and the stairway that leads from it to the grass plot of the upper level. The lower church was first intended for a great crypt, but it must have turned out lighter and less subterranean than was anticipated, for it became the chief part of the shrine, and the most wonderful and lavish decoration was spent on its adornment. Nowhere, outside a gallery, and hardly there has so much magnificent painting of the earliest days of the Renaissance been gathered together as in the lower church at Assisi. It may never be settled to which of the masters who worked there some of the frescoes belong, but the glorious hands of the Florentines Giotto and Cimabue we know for certain, and of the Sienese Simone Martini and Pietro Lorenzetti. It is impossible here to describe in detail or comment upon these paintings, which

S. FRANCESCO, ASSISI

are in themselves the goal and object of many pilgrimages. And, indeed, in the matter of pictures, the only service that a guide can do, is to lead his client before the beauties, and leave him, if he will, to drink. In the frescoed semi-darkness of the lower church, under the great, heavy vaultings of stone, one follows the sun round as it illuminates first one master and then another. The greatest glories are in the transept, and shine best after midday, but the morning light shows up the chapel of S. Martino, where Simone Martini painted his beautiful stiff warriors and saints. To left and right and over the high altar there seems at first so much that for a moment one despairs of disentangling anything, but bit by bit the details become plain. First realised, and most lovingly remembered, is that lovely Madonna and Saints painted at eye-level in the left transept, in the dreamy and exquisite Sienese style of Pietro Lorenzetti. In the right transept there stands out even above the pure and simple lines of Giotto's scenes from the life of the Virgin, that marvellous Madonna Enthroned of Cimabue. It is a miracle in its way. There is, in spite of its tranquillity, such a swiftness and flow about it, such a lightness in the drapery and lack of heavy corporeity in the figures. Though Cimabue was Giotto's master, it was not from such pictures as this that Giotto borrowed the solemn and

beautiful awkwardness of his people, with their grand and straightly-falling robes. Cimabue put Giotto in the way of a kind of painting that he himself never knew. He was the first to see beyond Byzantium, but he remained Byzantine to the core, and this fresco comes out of the east and not the west. The angel nearest to St. Francis, with her soft embroidered frock and supple tilted body is like nothing in the world so much as a delicate eastern dancing girl out of a fable. The little saint himself, standing apart from that heavenly crowd, is exactly the Francis for whom the church and its splendours were raised—the *Poverello*, the little, simple, sublime and pitiful man, in his brown monk's frock a part of humanity and not of the angels, showing only by his halo and his pierced hands and feet that he was assumed to heaven. In the likeness, Francis' very self seems to stand in the church.

The four great triangles over the high altar are filled by Giotto's allegories of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, and the Apotheosis of the saint. They are on different and more heroic lines from those quiet scenes he painted in the transept. There is the same magnificent simplicity of drawing, but it has now a kind of triumph and splendour in it. It is strange how, though the colours are lost, the meaning of those throngs of figures and angels

seems to be let loose when Mass is being celebrated at the high altar, and the church is full of music. The music and the voices and the tapering flames of the candles seem all to press up towards them, and they to transmute the sound into their own soaring lines, the music into the upward sweep of those thronged angels' wings. They are the apex and crown of the ceremony.

In the upper church Giotto and his pupils painted a long series of episodes from Francis' life. There, moving down the nave, one sees them at work portraying in their downright, beautiful and often most entertaining fashion, the well-known incidents of the saint's career—Francis clothing the poor, receiving the Stigmata, being vouchsafed a vision of his upholstered seat in heaven, supporting the slanting Lateran single-handed in obedience to the vision of Pope Innocent III who lies sleeping in a tabernacle close at hand. Perhaps the most beautiful of them all is Francis giving his cloak to a beggar, with the grand and simple figures of two men and a horse, planted against the background of a Giottesque village, with its straight and wooden-looking houses and its isolated and wind-bent trees climbing up the steep side of a ravine; and the most popular is almost certainly Francis preaching to the birds, which, painted against the farthest wall, beside the door, grows

into sight in the cool and watery colours of a Japanese print.

Cimabue's work in the choir is almost obliterated, but there is still something to be got from the long flowing lines of the angels and the sweep of their wings and drapery.

S. Francesco hardly yields its treasures to those that run over to Assisi from Perugia to spend the day. It needs to be taken, not at a gulp, but in little repeated sips, punctuated by long intervals spent in sitting in the sunshine on the low wall of the upper Piazza, delighting lazily in the church's soft outward colours, and the breadth and changing light and wide beauty of the view; intervals spent too it must be admitted, in trying to reconcile with the spirit of Francis the lot of those wretched little galled and tattered mules and donkeys that stagger up the hill under kicks and blows and loads out of all proportion to their size. The Assisans seem too poor to own any kind of respectable animal, so that they have no pride of possession that might induce them to spare their unlucky slaves. Neither does the economy of humanity seem ever to have been brought home to them.

Exploring church after church and moving from sanctuary to sanctuary in Assisi, one feels a certainty, almost a foreboding, that there is to be nothing secular or un-Franciscan in the excursion

from start to finish. But this is not actually the truth. There are in Assisi two matters of interest outside the domain of Francis and the church; they are the fortress and Metastasio, the one worthy a visit, the other a thought.

Metastasio, of whom nobody has heard to-day, but who was, during his lifetime, one of the celebrities of his century, was born in Assisi, as simple Pietro Trapassi, in 1698. He had a romantic career, once familiar to Europe, which began with his rescue from the gutter, where he was improvising poetry as a profession, by an important and serious man of letters called Vincenzo Gravina, and ended nearly a century later at the imperial court at Vienna. The interval had been spent by him in changing his name, and becoming a scholar, a poet, a gentleman, an *abate* and one of the most elegant and characteristic figures of the eighteenth century. He was early recognised as a writer of repute in Italy, but his real fame rested on his having contributed half its existence to the new-found art of opera by writing the plays which were adapted for the music. They were something more serious than *libretti*, being indeed five-act tragedies and comedies in the classical style. To-day their interest and literary value seems slight enough—they are dramas of smooth, facile and neatly-fitting verses, quite uncalculated to stir an emotion, and

infinitely less interesting than Corneille; they are, in fact, the exact tragedies and comedies that a born writer of occasional verses such as Metastasio was, might be expected to produce—but they were sufficiently strong and serious meat for the eighteenth century, and were furiously in fashion. The operas were translated, mimicked, quoted and lauded to the skies, and Metastasio found himself the possessor of that inexplicable and arbitrarily-bestowed treasure, a European reputation. Travellers to Italy sought him out to pay him honour. He was a goal for devout tourists, comparable to-day with the Sistine chapel and the Roman Forum, which was then still underground. He throve on the life, for adulation was what he chiefly required of the world, and he died rather miserably in Vienna, cut off from most of it, included only precariously on the fringe of the court circle, longing to return to Italy, but held back by lack of courage and pressure of domestic ties. In the nineteenth century his reputation went out like a candle. It is conceivable that in his prime his name and personality were more familiar in Europe than that of St. Francis, so that the whirligig of time has wreaked upon his memory a very thorough and unsparing revenge.

Even less than Metastasio, who was at least an *abate*, like so many gentlemen of his day, is the

castle of Assisi connected with the church, for its fame was as a property of those Suabians whose hand was always against the Pope. Yet in spite of its alien spirit, there is something to be said for its being the most attractive spot in Assisi—at certain times, that is, and in certain moods. One of the times is at sunset, and one of the moods is that satiety with art and churches, which, with the best will in the world, lays hold every now and then, on even the most devoted traveller in Italy. It is a rare pleasure then to climb out of the city, up by rough country paths between olives and wild flowers, and watch the sun set over the roofs, and rejoice in the familiar romance of old castles, which is not special to Assisi, but common to the globe. It is surprising, when one reaches it, to find how big the Rocca really is, and what a splendid length and strength of grey stone wall rises out of the short hill-top turf and overtops the town. It is surprising too, for those who have not carefully read their maps, to discover that Assisi is not, after all, plastered against the side of Monte Subasio, as appears from below, but occupies a separate hill, which drops perilously on the far side to the stream of the Tescio that encircles it. Up there, towards night, the taste of the sweet, sharp air, the sight above of the walls and bastions that seem black and fantastically huge and threatening in the uncertain

dusk, and below the warm lights of the houses, the sound of water falling down and city noises climbing up the hill, and that air of mystery and imagination that belongs to all old ruined places fill the heart and senses as full as they can hold. Something mundane and harmonious and satisfying threads its way into the picture, and the mortal remains of that mortal pride and greatness dispel a faint but undeniable air of pitifulness that lingers over Assisi.

The Portiuncula is at the station, so that it claims naturally to be visited either first or last; and yet, to take it either as a prologue or as an epilogue to Assisi is a pity. Historically it is the soul and centre of the whole story, for here Francis received his message, established his first colony in the wood round the holy and beloved chapel of the Little Portion that the Benedictines had given him for his own, and here he lived and prayed, worked miracles and died. To-day the chapel still stands its ground, a tragic relic, not among the tree-trunks of the quiet forest that once surrounded it, but in the white and arid waste of S. Maria degli Angeli, where a tip-requiring custodian turns one over to the charge of a sad-voiced monk, who will explain in any language the pathetic beauties of its antiquity, now obscured by paint. He has, too, to tell a long tale of miracles and wonders which seem

THE MARKET SQUARE, ASSISI

to have small connection with their surroundings and also to show the great art treasure of the Angeli, Andrea della Robbia's statue of the saint. Like all of the best Della Robbia work it is a beautiful and kindly thing, and wisely makes no attempt to be heroic beyond the capacity of its homely material. It is difficult to understand how people see in it an inspired likeness of Francis, for it is just a most pleasing, soft and characteristic image of any saint. Perhaps in itself it is not enough to induce one to visit the Portiuncula, and destroy its lovely and mystical legend with the painful apparition of its reality. For it is so holy a place that the need to preserve it for all the generations that have come and will come to pray there has robbed it of its beauty. All the faithful who come, bring Francis in their hearts, and read him into the surroundings, but the rest might well leave it out of their pilgrimage and start home with the natural loveliness of the Carceri or the man-made beauty of S. Francesco uppermost and triumphant in their minds.

CHAPTER VII

ORVIETO

Orvieto very handsomely faces the problem of being on a hill. Realising that in the case of altitudes like hers it is by no means better to travel hopefully than to arrive, she has provided against the ascent a funicular railway, which accomplishes in a direct five minutes what a cheap and weary tram or an expensive and still more weary horse would be at least three-quarters of an hour about. And once this initial ascent has been got over, there is practically no more climbing to be done, for the city is planted levelly upon a flat-topped hill, and does not cling to the summit of a peaked one. An amazingly elegant bus takes up the tale from the funicular, and as the size of the place forbids one's lodging being more than a few yards in any direction off its route, the arrival is accomplished with speed and ease.

Orvieto is a town of distinct and faintly melancholy personality, in which the Etruscan element, remote as it is, is strangely powerful. It is a site typical of the Etruscans, an almost isolated hill, commanding a wide stretch of country, exactly the

kind of stronghold they preferred, and which, before the Romans grew too strong for them, they well knew how to make impregnable. Though it happened that here almost the entire work of fortification and defence had been done beforehand for them by Nature. Orvieto is, in fact, an almost perfect natural fortress, for from under three parts of the circumference of its flat top, the hill drops away in an absolutely vertical cliff; so that from three points at least the city is unassailable. On the unprotected side, where the approach to the town is, there has naturally always been a fort, and there are still to be seen a few handsome remnants of its last incarnation.

As well as being powerfully situated, Orvieto was one of the richest and most powerful of the twelve capitals of the Etruscan league, and a conspicuous art centre. Innumerable treasures were carted away when the Romans took the city and attempted to destroy it. The Orvietans, or Volsinians as they then were, being obstinate malefactors, Rome used them with great harshness, and tried to stamp out the city before planting their own new settlement, *Urbs Vetus*, upon its site. And yet it is still Etruria rather than Rome that survives there. Rome was the conqueror, but when she herself was left helpless before the barbarian invaders, her traces disappeared more

completely than those of the city she had wished to obliterate. Here again the Etruscans proved themselves, on a bedrock basis, the stronger and the honester builders.

The fall of Volterra, in 270 B.C., had been virtually the end of Etruscan resistance. Orvieto followed in 264 B.C., and on the site of her ruins a Roman city, Urbibentum, was raised, while the original inhabitants built themselves a new Volsinii on the site of the modern Bolsena. Afterwards Orvieto must have gone the way of a small provincial town, for we do not hear of her leaving any impression on Roman history. She does not seem to have been conspicuous in connection with any of the Emperors, and was doubtless quietly wiped out by successive bands of barbarian invasions. However, when she appears again in history, in the Middle Ages, it is as a stalwart champion of the Popes, and from her Guelf-and-Ghibelline disturbances she emerged definitely Guelf. As early as 1260, she had sent troops to help the Florentines against the Ghibellines of Siena in the famous battle of Montaperti, and had probably lost most of them too, in the adverse fortunes of that day.

Orvieto often had the distinction of entertaining a Pope, when a visit to some high and well-fortified hill-top seemed healthier for him than remaining in one of the palaces of Rome. The city was near

at hand, loyal, and by reason of its position secure from attack—altogether a most convenient place of refuge. The only drawback was the lack of regular water-supply in case of siege ; but this defect in time was admirably remedied by the younger Sangallo.

The name of Orvieto's great medieval family whose arms decided that it was the Guelfs and not the Ghibellines who were to predominate, was Monaldeschi ; these, in characteristic fashion, having gained the victory, divided among themselves, and, one supposes for the sake of finding employment for all the city's gentlemen-at-arms carried on, under the titles of Muffati and Mercorini, a peculiarly bitter and ruthless war, which reduced the power and population of the city by leaps and bounds. This was fortunately interrupted for a little while by the powerful and ubiquitous Albornoz, who placated the city and built the fortress, which has not survived as well as some of his handiwork. There had also been native in Orvieto a family of Medici, of no great importance there, but probably the forebears of the great rulers of Florence.

Orvieto, being on a plateau, defeats one's natural first intention of climbing to the highest point of the city to get the lie of the land and see the view. Nothing is to be learnt of her situation

from inside the walls. A wise, if contradictory first action on arrival is to go out by the nearest gate and walk round the road that runs under her great cliffs. Here is to be seen no coloured panorama of roofs and houses stepping down a hillside, so familiar in Cortona and Perugia and Siena —only on the inner side of the roadway rises the sheer straight wall of the cliff, and away on the outer side stretch the plain and the hills. The face of the cliff has been worked so as to make it almost exactly vertical and so hopeless for attackers, and every here and there the rock has been bolstered up by masonry, which varies from the huge magnificent, lichen-covered block of the Etruscans to the clean squares of twentieth-century building.

These strange cliffs or *ripæ* as the Orvietans called them, used to be subject of much legislation. It was natural that houses on top had to be carefully kept from coming too near the edge in suspected places, and building licences were very jealously granted. Also people were expressly and elaborately forbidden to tamper with the *ripæ* or attempt to damage them—not, one would imagine, a very easy business, without a good supply of dynamite.

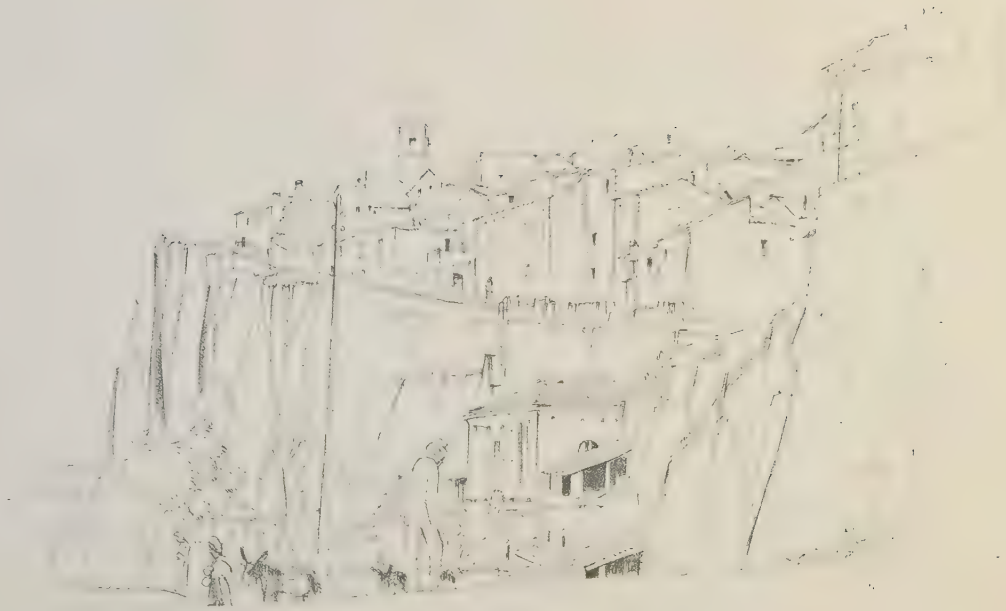
Everywhere along the road the outward view is magnificent—wide and free and in sunshine softly blue and green like all true Umbrian landscape

yet here always a little stern, forbidding and sinister, in harmony with the general character of Orvieto, *triste* as the Italians say, and not *ridente* like the hills and valleys round Perugia. Perhaps in bitter weather, when the snow on the near summits sends a chill breath over the city, the view is finest of all, especially on the north side, where one looks across the Paglia valley to bright snow peaks, and near at hand sees the river cutting in twists of sharp silver the cold grey and green landscape of the plain and lower hills.

With the exception of the little Porta della Rocca by the castle, there are only three gates—the minimum for an Etruscan city, which was obliged to have an entrance dedicated to each of three chief gods. At some points Orvieto still has an air of being deliberately inaccessible, for there is no entrance at all on the south side. Perhaps the happiest way of making the circuit is to begin on the north, so as to see, as one approaches the Porta Cassia, the remains of an old fortress on a hill, exactly framed by the opening. Nothing is left of it but a curved empty wall the shape of the shell of a broken bottle, but the mists of distance and the frame of the gateway make it a curiously attractive picture. Just outside the Porta Cassia itself, where the weighing machine of the modern customs man now stands, are some remains

evidently Etruscan, interesting but explained. An alcove the height of a small door, has been hollowed in the face of the cliff; above it, where the lintel would be, is carved the relief of a vase, battered but still rather handsome, and on each side lower down, enough rock has been hewn away to enable the sculptors to cut a low couch in stone. The " Dazio " or customs, housed now so naturally in the alcove, suggest that this has always been a pitch for a collector of taxes and dues, but the explanation may actually be far otherwise. Near-by there are some rough and precarious steps carved in the face of the rock, which suggest a hasty attempt to scale the cliff and surprise the city. About them too history seems to be silent, so a romantic or bloodstained episode may be fitted to them at will.

Beyond the Porta Cassia the road swings out a little from under the wall, and sloping down shows the cliffs more splendid and towering than ever. This perhaps is the finest view in all Orvieto—the Paglia valley on the right and the repeated ridges and folds of the hills from among which the river flows—geography made visible in an extraordinarily beautiful guise—and on the left, rising up magnificent and seeming to support the grey city buildings like a crown, the mighty cliffs, glowing in all the strong and splendid colours of naked stone.



OUTSIDE THE CITY, ORVIETO

Just here, a few paces from the road, there lies, among green hillocks of short grass and within a stone's throw of a peasant's cottage, what is left of the old burying ground, where about six centuries before Christ, the Etruscans laid their dead—outside the city wall, as their religion and custom demanded. Like almost every other relic of Etruscan building, this graveyard is a thing of beauty as well as of interest. Time has rewarded the builders for the unsparing labour they must have used in quarrying and working their great blocks of stone, and seems now to make no further assault on them. A thousand seasons have weathered the great slabs to a uniform grey-green, and now they seem kin with and part of the fresh earth in which they stand.

The Etruscans had various ways of laying the body to rest and equipping the soul for its last journey. Sometimes they burnt their dead and sometimes buried them, and placed the urns or coffins in well-tombs underground or covered them with an artificial mound or tumulus, or, as here at Orvieto, laid them in little rock-built chambers of the likeness of houses. There are here two miniature streets of tombs, like tiny stone houses lining a road, each one square-roofed and covered with a little stone ornament in the shape of a ball or a cone, or of some other simple pattern, and every

one built a step higher than the last. They are all half underground, approached by two or three steep steps leading down to the entrance, from which the great slab that formed the actual door has been carted away. Beside many of the entrances a single word is carved in Etruscan characters, evidently the name of the dead. Inside, the tombs are of uniform pattern. The stone of the walls is worked to make it smooth and straight, and the roof is of Noah's Ark shape, except that the extreme top is flat. Not urns containing ashes, as at Perugia, but actual coffins were laid in these tombs, one on each of the two couches or shelves that project from adjacent walls. In the hollow between the couch and the ground were put all those effects and possessions of the dead man which he was thought to need for his last journey—vases with food, weapons, jewellery, perhaps playthings and ornaments. In two of the tombs, some of these relics, of the ordinary Etruscan type, have been left in place, but needless to say, most of the chambers have surrendered their interests to museums.

Two complete rows of tombs have been excavated, and stand for the world to gather from them the lessons of the past. But much of that ancient city of the dead still lies undisturbed under the soil. In a dell near by, half covered by grass, is

another street of tombs, and not far from that is a collection of loose slabs and little displaced ornaments of stone lying haphazard on the earth. There one can often see a peasant child from one of the neighbouring houses scraping out with her finger the moss, which, following the cuts made in the stone more than two thousand years ago, has exactly patterned itself into an inscription in that strange language that we cannot read. Comically, at a little distance, are sticking up out of the earth, like crocuses lifting their first shoots, solitary little stone peaks covered with moss or lichen, marking the tops of still more tombs. The beauty of this old burying-ground makes one a little thoughtful. It is all very still and green and fragrant, informed with a dignity that is not only the work of time.

Outside the Porta Maggiore is a permanent pleasant group of outspanned carts, some of them undergoing repairs while the mules, donkeys or horses that draw them are being shod in the farriery near by. The Italian peasant's travelling outfit is not usually an up-to-date piece of locomotion, but he faithfully paints and repaints it a gallant and dazzling blue or red, and so beautifies the landscape. Either for some kindred æsthetic reason, or perhaps to avert the evil eye, which one could hardly fancy would be likely to rest enviously on them, he garnishes his sorry little beasts with

scarlet tassels and bells, and so increases the inconveniences of a life that must already be sufficiently wretched.

Apropos of donkeys and the Porta Maggiore, I remember that just here, on a rainy afternoon, I once saw a comical sight. As I was hurrying up towards the gate, my eyes held severely earthward in an effort to make the best pace I could, a jingling passed me on the road, and looking up I saw the back of a "sportman" presumably returning from the chase. He was a very big man, riding a very small donkey, which had an initial load in the shape of an unwieldy bundle of straw hanging pannier-wise at each side; but what made the picture funny was that he had slung his predatory gun at his back and unfurled the flag of peace in the shape of an immense black umbrella, from which only the hindquarters of the donkey protruded into the rain. Singing a tune, to the beat of which he industriously prodded his mount with his heels, he rode in under that respectable gateway, and I blessed him for a lucky man, unencumbered by an Anglo-Saxon self-conscious sense of the ridiculous.

Beyond the Porta Maggiore is another stretch of road, like the first but a little gentler, bounded on the inner side by the sheer cliff, and on the outer side unbounded except for the soft hills and the

sky. At the Porta Paolina one must re-enter the city, for here the roadway ends.

Having done with the natural glories of Orvieto, it is time to turn the eyes to that great man-made glory, the Cathedral, the fame of which is loud and general, and is what, in the first instance, brings travellers to the place.

After one or two experiences, one learns to approach Italian Cathedrals with a certain caution. One discovers that the English connotation of the word—peace and calm and severe majesty—is by no means universal. Frankly, at first blush, the great churches of Italy leave us a bit puzzled; for although we did not quite know what to expect, we did not quite expect what we find. It is so different to visit St. Peter's, or the Duomo at Florence, Milan or Siena, from what it is to spending a day at Canterbury or at Wells. The report in circulation of Orvieto's Cathedral is two-fold and invariable. It is "the finest example of Italian Gothic" and the façade is "probably the most gorgeous polychrome monument in existence." On the face of it it sounds a little depressing. From experience we know that "Italian Gothic" is a curious idea to conjure with, and "polychrome monument" is at best a painful phrase. So it is a rare and delicious experience to have the Cathedral burst upon one in its own most individual beauty,

and to satisfy the eyes with the sight of it, unregardful of the categories of architecture or of art. It stands on the south side of the city, at its edge, on a little higher ground than the rest of the plateau. It is placed most admirably, a glorious apex to the little narrow streets that run towards it and down which it gleams. The cathedral square is no orthodox Italian Piazza, but a small flagged space, bordered by pleasant buildings of different periods. On the right is the museum and one or two quietly impressive palaces, which house the modest picture gallery and the orthodox Etruscan collection, and across to the left is a group of low houses like cottages, which give the place something of the familiar and restful air of a cathedral close. On the top of a small tower among them, a charming little bronze man gives a repeated entertainment by striking the hours on a bell.

Approaching the Duomo up one of the narrow streets, one gets a first full impression of mellow gorgeousness from the many-coloured, pointed and pinnacled façade; but a look at the building itself reveals the comforting truth that it is simple to the point of being modest. It is built in alternate courses or bands of black and white stone, not gleaming like marble, but dull and weather-stained and soft. The shape is of a cross, with great curved buttresses of black and white springing out along

the arms. A row of little alcoves in each aisle, too small to be called chapels, make the outside wall swell out in five regular bulges which save the plainness of the building from severity.

The front itself takes a longer and far closer examination. Like all highly-decorated façades, it seems a thing, in a sense, exterior to the church, not a part of it, but its greatest and most elaborate ornament; but here at least it is in perfect harmony with the building. The lines of it suggest at first a bold pattern of triangles, for the upper half consists of three great gables and four slim triangular pinnacles that separate and bound them, and directly underneath the gables, divided from them by a gallery, and repeating their exact proportions, are the three great pointed canopies of the doors. The triangles are separated horizontally by the gallery, and vertically by the stems or shafts of the pinnacles, and to remove the fear of angularity, there is a rose window above the main door, which is itself round and many times outlined in courses of marble.

As is natural, the details of colour and of line in the façade are at first inseparable. It is a warm and glowing whole, lit by the sun and shining like a great jewelled carving in stone against the sky. The foundation of the colours is the soft rosy orange of the old marble; the shafts of the

pinnacles, which are red and green, are striped with thin lines of gold which gloriously hold the sunlight, and to all this are added the innumerable brightnesses of the mosaics, which are, in their present reincarnation, the least likeable part of the whole, and that which could best bear to be modified or altered.

On all that surface there is scope for many details of decoration. The niches of the upper gallery are filled with small marble statues of the prophets and apostles, covering nearly all the lowest level between the doors is some curious and most interesting carving in low relief, illustrating scenes from the Bible and the Last Judgment, and above the main door is a simple and beautiful Madonna and Child in bronze, by Andrea da Pisano. Some of the most interesting pieces of decoration are the four curious and powerful symbolic figures of the Evangelists—the angel, the lion, the bull and the eagle.

To see and know it, one must look at the façade long and often, in all lights and weathers, and once, if one can, on a clear moonless night, when in a harmony of two dim colours only, its own soft orange and the almost colourless blue background of the sky, the lines, uninterrupted by surface decoration, show pure and clear. There one sees it in its beauty as a building, which is after all a beauty of nothing but sheer proportion and shape and line.

THE APPROACH TO THE CATHEDRAL, ORVIETO

Inside the Cathedral is simplicity itself---a wide nave and two aisles with great pillars crowned very high up by massive, rather primitive-looking capitals, the whole softly black and white, with a kind of naive and ingenuous look about it that is adorable. The façade is beautiful but sophisticated; the interior, perhaps by a supreme effort of art, seems the most unsophisticated thing in the world. At one time at the base of each pillar stood a great baroque statue on a pedestal, but these by a wonderful exercise of sense and taste have been cleared away.

On fine days the sunshine pours generously in at the open door, but even on rainy ones there is a suggestion of warmth inside, because the slit-like windows in the alcoves and the Gothic windows above the doors are filled with golden-coloured transparent marble, which in all weathers admirably counterfeits the glow of sunlight. This happily neutralises the coldness from the great stained-glass window, and leaves a fine warm light in the church. Two more beauties are the open gallery that runs above the arches of the pillars and over the great doors, and the series of frescoes which cover the walls of the choir, some of which are by Pietro di Puccio, who worked above Benozzo Gozzoli in the Campo Santo at Pisa.

There are only two chapels in the cathedral,

each of them the goal of many pilgrims. One is the Capella del Corporale, where is guarded the relic from the famous miracle of Bolsena, and the other bears witness to the high-watermark of Signorelli's genius. Except for a painted panel by Lippo Memmi, where the Madonna, a charming lady in the early Sienese style, shelters a throng of the faithful under her wide cloak, and the sanctuary of the relic itself, there is little to see in the first. In connection with it, however, there is much to hear, as the Cathedral is said to have been conceived and built as a resting-place for the holy relic that reposes there. Properly speaking, the treasure does not belong to Orvieto, but to the village of Bolsena, near at hand, where the miracle occurred. The story is that a German priest finding that he could not absolutely believe the doctrine of transubstantiation, made a pilgrimage to Rome to have his faith made whole. On his way back he stopped at the village of Bolsena, and while celebrating Mass in the village church, having consecrated the bread and wine, he saw the corporal, or cloth which covers the Host, miraculously stained with drops of living blood.

There is a charming and rustic fourteenth-century poem, which, combining all the chapters of the story into one, tells of the priest alone at the altar praying God to help him believe before he

celebrates the Mass, of two peasants passing the church door and espying him fallen in a swoon at the moment of the miracle, of the report which they carry in awe and wonder to the village, and finally of the coming of the Pope to remove the holy blood-stained relic to Orvieto, carrying it in a procession of psalms and joy. One feels a little sorry for the township of Bolsena. The possession of such a relic would have meant life and fame for her. But Orvieto wrested it away, and apparently her claims were never even heard. The miracle occurred in 1263. The next year the festival of Corpus Domini was instituted, St. Thomas Aquinas composed his famous office for the day, and not long afterwards the Cathedral at Orvieto was begun, a magnificent and worthy shrine.

On the walls of the second chapel, Signorelli bore witness to the most his generation could perform, and foreshadowed in a measure what was possible to the next. He was Michelangelo's master and shows himself the source not only of his stupendous technique, but also of some of that amazing boldness of spirit that was to make his pupil the marvel of the world. If it were not, literally, preposterous to say so, Signorelli's frescoes are Michelangelesque—just as Perugino's worst efforts seem to be poor copies of Raphael. There is something colossal about them, although they

remain completely uncontorted and untainted by any artistic megalomania.

Of the four great frescoes that cover the walls, the first three, the Resurrection of the Dead, the Inferno, and the Summons of the Elect, represent more or less usual subjects treated in a powerfully individual manner; and the fourth, the Anti-Christ, is a kind of furious allegory, made pictorial here for the first time. The first three frescoes are almost entirely covered with nude figures, in the execution of which Signorelli has, with the exception of Michelangelo, no peer. With Signorelli the drawing of the nude went almost as high as it could go, until the genius of Michelangelo pushed it remorselessly to the utmost point, from which there is only a descent.

In the first picture where the resurrected dead are listening to the last trump or painfully climbing out of their tombs, where, by a curious conceit, their skeletons still seem to rest and mock them, almost every figure stands out separate, surrounded by air and space, each one an individual marvel of drawing. The whole composition is in a note of strained quiet and suspense. In the second fresco, the first has, as it were, been terribly resolved. The suspense is broken, judgment has been given, and torment is in writhing progress. The picture is one vast inextricable mass of naked human

forms—naked souls being driven to torment by naked devils, who are distinguishable from them by the livid green colour of their flesh. It is a conception which, in the hands of such as Rubens, would become a thing of nausea and dismay, but which here, in spite of its passionate feeling, is treated with a kind of coolness of execution that makes of it a *tour de force* not from which one turns horror-struck away, but which holds the attention with increasing power. The third fresco, in which angels are raining down wreaths from the clouds upon the heads of the blessed, is perhaps the least interesting of the four. The subject requires that the "pity and terror" of the first two shall not be present, but they are not succeeded by a real benignity and happiness. The nude figures in the lower plane are still magnificent, but there is something a little lacking from the angels with their garlands and harps. It seems that not once, while he was painting the whole chapel, was Signorelli in the mood for seeing angels in any other guise than as messengers of the Divine Wrath.

The last fresco is a wonder of composition and of narrative—the epic of the Anti-Christ and his followers, who rob the temple, slay the faithful, seduce women with gold, and finally gather about him, to hear him, in the guise and habit of the

true Christ, preaching the word that the devil whispers in his ear. Here, and in the curious End of the World, which frames the entrance of the chapel, Signorelli turns his attention to other things than the nude.

With the exception of two, the splendid groups arranged like pyramids in the triangular panels of the vaulted ceiling are also by his hand. The exceptions are the work of Fra Angelico, whose prophets and whose Christ, in their beatitude and utter calm, form the greatest contrast thought could provide to the vigour and turbulence of Signorelli. Indeed this chapel cannot but give the impression that Signorelli was a fierce and violent, although splendid painter ; but he should be remembered also for that exquisite Madonna and Child of his in the Uffizzi which shows the man of tenderness who is so often the complement and obverse of the man of rage.

The Cathedral is Orvieto's single architectural magnificence. For the rest the city is curiously like what we understand by a Cathedral town except that it gives its name to a particularly excellent brand of white wine, which is drunk all over Italy, and still, in the smaller hostels of the city of its birth, flows gratis with meals, in a beautiful golden stream. With the exception of the main thoroughfare the stone-paved streets are

strangely quiet. They are also strangely clean. The houses are seldom more than two storeys high, which is most rare for Italy, and in spite of being square and built of stone they have a cottagey look about them that endears them to the fancy. There are not even very many churches. S. Domenico, almost opposite to the Cathedral on the north side of the city, is second to it in size and importance, and S. Andrea, in the chief Piazza, with a many-sided tower and a three-pointed façade, is second to it in charm.

On Sundays and in fine weather, the Orvietans take their pacific pleasure among the ruins of the fortress, now transformed into a pleasant and fragrant garden, with wide and glorious views out on the river valley and the Umbrian hills. In the garden is a charming open-air theatre, built perhaps upon an ancient foundation, where "Comus" or "As You Like It" would have a happier chance than ever they get upon the boards. Not far from the fortress is the famous well by which Sangallo solved the problem of the city's water-supply. It is called the Pozzo di S. Patrizio, and was begun in 1527, the year of the last sack of Rome, when the Pope had fled to his usual hilltop refuge. The water comes from a natural spring, flowing somewhere about half-way down the hill-side, and the well is just a circular shaft which un-

covers it to the sky. It sounds simplicity itself, but that the water is over two hundred feet below the surface, and the solid rock had to be hollowed to this depth and then the shaft built up and perfected with masonry. Donkeys, those unhappy little beasts of burden, used to bring the water to the surface, stepping down, down, down by one shallow spiral staircase, and toilsomely up by another. One consolation is that they had light for their journeys, for there is a good arrangement of windows winding round in a spiral on the inside of the shaft, and if they cared to look out they would have seen the rock made beautiful with ferns and growing things. But I daresay they never did care to. The well, which seems a strange and beautiful construction to those who stand and admire from the top, made probably a weaker appeal to those who climbed and descended the winding staircases as a lifework. The custodian relates with as much pride as if he had constructed them himself, that there are five hundred mortal steps, which portentous number, reckoning the ups with the downs, happens to be only four short of the truth.

S. ANDREA, ORVIETO

CHAPTER VIII

TODI

THERE are two excellent reasons why holiday makers in Umbria should go to Todi. The first is that it is a delightful day's excursion from Perugia —a kind of historical picnic to be compassed easily between breakfast and dinner, and the second is that it is the birthplace of the Blessed Jacopone, who ought not, among the Franciscans or even among the personalities of this world, to be forgotten.

Todi is another of these old cities, built on high and inaccessible Umbrian hilltops, and has only lately, by the railway and a new road been reclaimed into communication with the world. But the call has come too late, and it is difficult to think of the little town regaining the habit of anything more than a merely nominal existence. Truly, if sadly, life to-day must depend to a large extent on commerce and industrialism, and both of these are completely foreign to Todi; nor is Jacopone Francis, to support his birthplace with a kind of spiritual industry, as the saint does Assisi.

Todi, originally called Tuder, is old, even amid

the general Umbrian level of antiquity. The Umbrians were there before the Etruscans, and some of the basis of the city's great walls may actually belong to them. The place was a Roman town of some importance, and boasted a great temple to Mars, of which a handsome fragment still remains. For Todi from earliest days had been extremely warlike and won for herself the now inconceivable title of "Marzia," which, when she rose, as she did early, to the dignity of a city commune, she justified by subduing various of her neighbours and extending a protective patronage even as far as Terni and Amelia.

From the outside, even to-day she looks splendid. She is not so small as to be mistaken for a village, and there is a fine strength of city wall and masonry about her. Also there is something always romantic in spires that stand up against the sky from the topmost point of a hill, and in walls that continue the perpendicular edge of a cliff. There are no better moments in the excursion than the last one before entering the gate, when one sees the upper level of the city round the Cathedral raised on its crag sheer above the Tiber bed, and the last one before entering the train, when at sunset the whole stretch of roofs and spires lies spread out high up on the hill.

The Piazza, where the bus comes to a standstill

remembers that the place was once a power. It is, in its way, as charming and characteristic as anything of the kind in Italy—not magnificent, of course, but complete with the three architectural dignities that are the outward signs of a city commune—a Cathedral, for public worship and public ceremonies, a Palazzo Publico, or home of Justice and the constitution, and a Palace for the Capitano or Podestà—buildings of general significance, but everywhere, and here in particular, of individual construction and design. The actual Piazza is very fine—long and sunny and well-paved, and the buildings have separate points of very great beauty; though there is about them a suggestion that the builders tired at some point of their original plan, or were peremptorily interrupted by a new idea. This, however, does not in the least interfere with their charm, but adds a touch of humorous uniformity to it, and makes the buildings mellowed as they are by all these centuries, increasingly engaging.

The Cathedral, for instance, possesses half of a very fine and simple, largely-Gothic, façade, with a splendid approach of broad steps and a handsome main door with a good rose window over it. At this point, however, the first idea stops dead. Evidently as the main body of the church joins on behind the solid lower part of the façade, it was

considered emptiness and vanity to add the triangle at the top. Again, at the right side there are two fine storeys of a square campanile, which are abruptly finished off with a stone balustrade and surmounted with a little hexagonal peak, which though pleasant enough in itself, gives the idea of a head planted, without the intermediate gradations of neck and shoulders, in the middle of a stout body to which it had never belonged. And yet the whole effect is undoubtedly charming. The Cathedral is not very interesting inside, but it is at least unassuming, and has one very beautiful feature in the shape of a second aisle on the right, of which the open side is framed with delicate Gothic arches.

The Palazzo of the Capitano, except for a great unrailed outside staircase, is less heterogeneous. Its windows are the finest thing about it, and the three lower ones, with their lovely pointed canopies are reminiscent of the best architecture of Perugia. Todi's little museum is housed in the Piazza Communale, also in the square. For all except the most devout it is not a necessary pilgrimage, as it maintains little besides the regulation Etruscan exhibits which become familiar through experience. In the way of pictures it boasts a Lo Spagna in much the same way as Gubbio does that Madonna del Belvedere of Nelli—good pictures both of them,

and an excellent bait for tourists in lieu of better. It is the Piazza itself that is the town's real and undoubted art treasure.

S. Fortunato, a few steps away from the Piazza, is larger and more imposing than the Cathedral, and is also approached by an important sweep of steps. Half of the front is still unfaced, but the building is of fine design and proportion, and the great door is very beautiful, of Gothic pattern, and outlined in many courses of marble. Here too the tower has been a complete success, and shows up everywhere, black-capped, and as a pleasing, slightly teutonic-looking landmark. The inside is a cold and would-be-Gothic desolation of white plaster—of fine proportions certainly, but of little beauty—in which, one fancies, the worshippers of modern Todi would hardly disturb the void. S. Fortunato is almost the highest point in the city, and is nearly on a level with the ruins of the fortress. There is only the hulk of one grey bastion now left standing on the summit of the hill, under whose venerable shadow sheep nibble the grass and school-children play their shouting and scrambling games, and near by which is the ideal pitch for the midday camp, for it is a wonderful vantage-point for the surrounding country. One of the great, spacious Umbrian views stretches like a map before one—first the downward-sloping

olive-groves of Todi's own hill, then a circle of more or less level valley, traversed by the white roads that have flung themselves in fantastic curves and loopings off the hills, then the foothills of the range opposite, then the middle hills, that the snow covers and uncovers according to the mood of the Spring, and in the far background a few sharp peaks that show always gleaming and white. Just a twist of the Tiber is visible, making a bright and delicate curve of glass-green through its own dark valley.

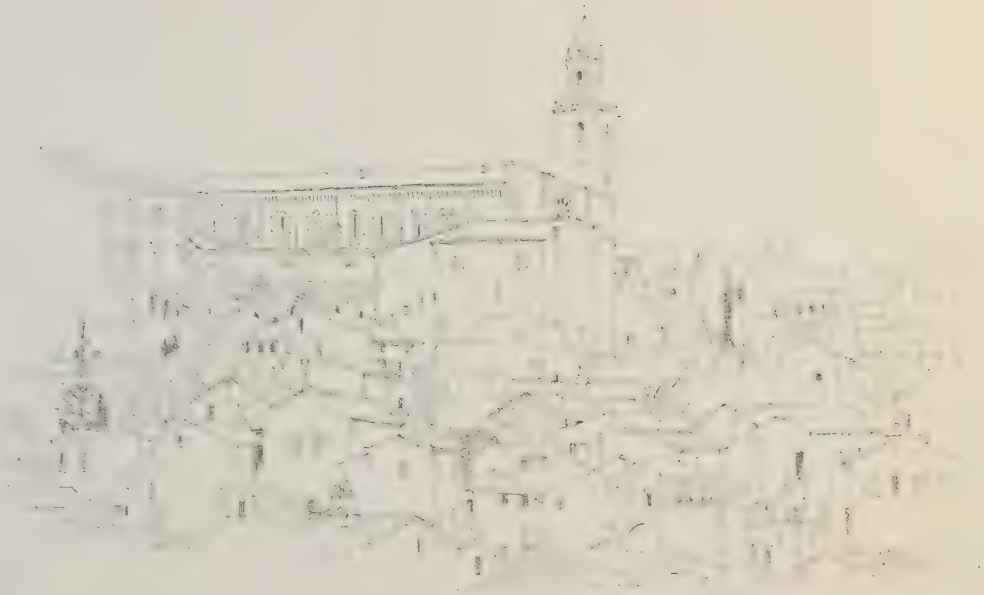
Below S. Fortunato there girdle the hill at intervals the remains of no less than three circles of walls, and on the sunny paths below them most of the business of the city seems to go forward. The only industry apparent in Todi, besides the refooting of socks, is the making of rope, and on a sunny strip of path under the second wall are planted the wheel and stakes and paraphernalia of the trade. It is easy to forget a half-an-hour in watching the brown old men with tufts of flax floating out from under their coats at work joining and stretching and winding the rope, the manufacture of which, like basket-making and weaving and other simple and immemorial arts has a strange attraction for sophisticated eyes. From under the rope-walk, little stony unpractical paths run off towards the bottom of the hill, traversing gardens, which seem

nothing but patches of much-tended soil among a wilderness of stones. That is the worst of hill cities—gardens are an impossibility to them; although when someone has bethought himself to plant an almond-tree in one of the handfuls of earth, the beauty of the pink and delicate blossom spread against the grey old walls more than atones for any lack of greenness there may be. The back streets and by-paths of Todi seem, as far as one can guess, hardly to have altered since the Middle Ages. For the sight-seer the old stone houses, narrow streets, crumbling courtyards and picturesque decay are full of romance and poetry, but they must mean nothing but prose and discomfort to the regular inhabitants of the place. One wonders to see the neatness and modern smartness that come tripping out of those dark and chilly interiors—the height of the heels, and the fashionableness of the clothes.

There is, however, one corner in Todi which, in comparison with the rest, looks surprisingly clean and kempt and in touch with the modern world. It is the plot round S. Maria dello Consolazione, which stands up spruce and impressive on a little level just below the crest of the hill, and is the city's pride. It is a solid and handsome church of late Renaissance design, built in the shape of a Greek cross, with a very fine dome in the middle, surrounded and partly obscured by a bevy of four smaller domes

which crown the arms of the cross, and attest perhaps to the architect's skill, but do nothing to beautify the building. Standing as it does in a neat grass plot, and approached by a tidy little avenue of trees, it is a strange contrast to the rest of the ramshackle old city. It has been rather extravagantly admired, perhaps because of its unexpectedness in these surroundings, and the design has even been attributed to Bramante, who is hardly likely to have a hand in it. The inside is, however, very pleasing, finely proportioned and beautifully lighted by the windows in the great dome. A dozen huge apostles, in the oppressive baroque style of the great figures in St. Peter's, fill twelve niches round the walls, their deadly whiteness marring the soft yellow of the natural stone; but happily the place is big and airy enough to rise superior to these large presences. The smooth green plot round the church is one of the city's playgrounds, and probably shows to best advantage when garnished as it often is, with a swarm of local baby orphans, red-cheeked and blue-overalled, absorbed under those imposing walls, in the endlessly delightful game of pushing each other over, and, as their turn comes to be victims, trotting back to the kind nun in charge of them to be gently scolded and comforted.

From the suave and handsome S. Maria della



THE CATHEDRAL, TODI

Consolazione, which was not finished until 1604, it is a far cry back to the city of Jacopone. The Frate, whose name it is that now keeps Todi's in the remembrance of the world, was born in 1230, not long, that is, after the death of Francis, whose devoted follower he was to become. His story, like that of the saint, is one of conversion from a worldly life to one of holiness; and he had many points of similarity with his master, although the curious and rather bizarre streak in his nature was certainly peculiar only to himself. He was, however, like Francis, both a true religious and a true poet. There is a portrait of him lurking unexpectedly in a stained-glass window in the Baptistery of the Cathedral at Prato, which unlike all the idealised portraits of Francis, gives the impression of being a good likeness. The face suggests a genuine rather than a popular idea of mysticism, being not narrow and aquiline, but broad, with big hollow features, and a wide fanatical gaze.

Jacopone was bred to the study of the law, and took a degree at Bologna, where he entered into the enthusiastic and prodigal life of the university. Having done well at his books, he returned to Todi to make a name and fortune for himself, and when he was not very old he took a charming lady of the city, Vanna, for his wife. One day while they and the rest of the world were present

at a tourney, the hastily-erected stand on which they sat gave way, and in the confusion and stampede that followed the lady Vanna was mortally wounded. Jacopone carried her out of the crowd, and laying her in a quiet place and loosening her garments to give her relief, he found that next to her skin she wore a hair shirt. Her tragic death, and the sudden knowledge that in spite of her gaiety and youth, her mind, unknown to him, had been absorbed in spiritual things, turned Jacopone forever against the world. A fury of repentance for his past career seized him, and he began to live a new life of completest abasement and humility, devoting himself to every medieval extravagance of self-subjection. So entire and literal was his practice of poverty, that his townsfolk, with the natural downrightness of the Middle Ages, reputed him mad ; but no one, as his writings show, was ever saner than Jacopone, whose only madness was that "santa pazzia" that he himself humbly avowed. For many years however he refused to become a priest or to connect himself formally with the Church, and it was not until 1278, ten years after his conversion, that he took the vows of a Franciscan tertiary, or lay brother.

One might suppose that from this point hence-forward his history would be a simple record of quiet orthodox holiness, practised with the rigours

and severity common to all religious men, and especially to converts in the Middle Ages. But this is not the truth. After 1278 Jacopone's life enters upon a second stage, public and political, in which he proved the kind of character he was. There had apparently been more than ordinary penitence that had prevented him from taking formal vows. He was a religious, but, like many of his contemporaries, he saw little in the present state of the Church to convince him that it was a link with God. His becoming a Franciscan was in no sense the beginning of a life of acceptance of the condition of the Church, but rather the outward sign of his determination to alter it if he could. From this time onwards he deliberately involved himself, poor lay brother as he was, in the Church's high and difficult affairs, with, naturally, the most serious consequences to himself.

In his day the Papacy was entering upon one of its worst periods. It was the time when rival families competed to get their relatives or candidates elected to the Papal throne, and gold and bloodshed and intrigue were the determining factors in the elections. The Colonna and Orsini rivalry was then at its height, and the scandals deplored by Dante were the order of the day. Jacopone da Todi, as well as being possessed of a lively and passionate indignation at such a state of affairs, was

possessed also of an unlimited power of expressing it, which he did not hesitate to use. With even greater boldness than Dante he addressed the most outspoken satire, criticism and admonishment to the persons of the Popes themselves. He, as well as the great Florentine poet, had lived through that curious and unworthy period of Papal history in which, after a series of Popes who represented the ascendancy of various private families and who were uniformly consigned by Dante to the pains of hell, a head of Christendom had been chosen in the person of Peter Morone, a hermit of holy and rustic life, who, in his eightieth year, was triumphantly dragged from his cave on a mountain-side to sit on Peter's throne. It was he who, in Dante's words, made the great refusal, by abdicating after five tormented months of attempting to rule the Church. To him, on his election, Jacopone addressed a poem, which outlined with terrifying directness the situation in which a hermit might expect to find himself, who in extreme old age had forsaken his life of contemplation and been thrust into the foremost position of the world. The style of the poem, here as always, is rustic and simple, as Jacopone evidently intended it should be, but the direct and stinging content of the lines can be compared with the invective of Dante himself.

"What will you do, Peter Morone, now you have come to the test? Now we shall see the work that you have contemplated in your cell. If you deceive the world its curse will follow you. The eyes of Christendom are fixed on you as on a paragon of wisdom; if you hold not the balance of justice steady, you shall answer for it to God. . . . The Roman court is a furnace wherein purest gold is refined, but where alloy turns to cinders and to ashes. If it was the thought of office that allured you no vileness could be more corrupt, and your life will be accursed, that you have lost God for the sake of this tit-bit. . . . Greatly I pity you; in your place I would wish to die, for they have put upon your neck the yoke of your damnation. . . . Beware of the cardinals who have fallen to a low estate; none has any thought but to enrich his family. Beware of the clergy whom you will find like ravening dogs and whose thirst is too deep to be lessened by drinking. Beware of the barrator who turns black into white; O, if you know not how to defend yourself, you will pipe a poor tune."

The successor of the unlucky Celestine V was Boniface VIII, again condemned by Dante to eternal obloquy. But Boniface was not old and powerless, and when Jacopone addressed his violent and unpalatable poetry to him, he took strong measures. The Umbrian's chief grievance against

the Pope was that he favoured the Conventuals of the Franciscan rule, who did not live according to the first injunction of the founder, and that he had revoked the privileges that Celestine had granted to the simpler and humbler-living Spirituals. Jacopone also had the misfortune of having his name associated with some of Boniface's enemies, who had spread abroad the rumour, which obtained great currency, that certain divine voices at whose bidding Celestine had abdicated, had had a human origin, and had been engineered by no other person than the present Pope himself. Accordingly Jacopone was excommunicated, seized, and cast into prison. In the first days of his captivity he addressed biting and angry words to the Pope, but afterwards his spirit quailed a little, and like the rest of the captives he begged to be pardoned. But in spite of his humilities and his repeated pleas, Boniface would have no mercy, and not even the year 1300, the marvellous Jubilee, brought his release. He languished in prison, fancying himself the only man in Italy who had no share in the general pardon and rejoicing. Boniface himself, however, was wretchedly murdered in 1302, and by Benedict XI Jacopone was pardoned and absolved.

But it is not only on account of his satire that the friar of Todi is to be remembered as a poet.

He wrote a great number of hymns or *Laudes*, as they are called, in which, in the true Franciscan way, simply and childishly, and yet with a clear insight and with undeniable poetry, he discussed questions of spiritual and mortal life. He is also claimed as the author of the famous *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, one of the loveliest hymns in existence. Perhaps the most interesting and at the same time one of the most beautiful of his compositions is the Madonna's lament for her Son, the *Pianto della Madonna de la Passione del Figliuolo Iesù Christo.* It is written as a straightforward poem, but it has in it the suggestion of a play, for in the verses characters speak in turn, and it shows particularly that simple and strong dramatic quality that is the essence of all Jacopone's poetry. It gives the suggestion of a tiny miracle play, and it might indeed have been the inspiration of some of the religious dramatic representations of the fourteenth century. There is a simple quality of pity and wonder in it that makes it strangely appealing.

Messengers come first and tell the news to Mary.

> " Donna del Paradiso lo tuo figliuolo è preso,
> Iesù Christo beato."

(" O Lady of Paradise, your Son is taken, the Blessed Jesus Christ.")

Mary replies in wonder:

"Como esser porrìa — che non fece mai follia,
Christo la spene mia — homo l' avesse pigliato."

("How can they have taken Him, Christ, my hope, who never did a wrong.")

They repeat the tidings and call to Magdalen. Mary throws herself before Pilate, while the crowd shouts, "Crucify, crucify." A voice among the people tells how Christ is being brought forth, with the robbers, and crowned with thorns, because He called Himself King. The Madonna sees her Son, and cries:

"O figlio, figlio, figlio, — figlio amoroso giglio,
Figlio, chi dà consiglio — al cor mio angustiato?
Figlio, occhi giocondi, — Figlio, co non respondi?
Figlio, perche nascondi — del pecto ove s' è lactato?"

("O, my Son, my Son, my Son, my Lily of Love, my Son, who will give counsel now to my anguished heart? O Son of kindly eyes, O Son, why do you not reply? Son, why do you hide from the breast where you did suck?")

Then comes the crucifixion, and the crowd announcing it step by step. Christ speaks from the Cross, bidding Mary now take John in His place, and the Mother makes her last lament.

S. FORTUNATO, TODI

" Figlio bianco e biondo,
Figlio, perchè t' a el mondo,
Figlio dolce e piacente,
Figlio hatte la gente
O Ioanne, figlio novello,
Sentito agio il coltello
Che morto ha figlio e mate
Trovasse abracciate,
figlio volto giocondo,
figlio, così sprezato ?
figlio de la dolente,
malamente tractato.
morto è lo tuo fratello,
che fu prophetizato.
de dura morte afferrate,
mate e figlio abracciato."

("O my Son, white and golden, Son of the sweet countenance, Son, why has the world scorned you thus ? Lovely and pleasing Son, Son of the stricken one, evilly have the people treated you. O, John, my new child, your brother is dead. I have felt the knife that was prophesied. It has slain both mother and Son, and brought bitter death upon them, and in death they are embraced, clasped in each other's arms.")

In its simplicity and utter sincerity the poem is full of the spirit of Francis, and it is also full of the inimitable naïve beauty that crops up every now and then in the verses of simple and countrified people, and is as unconscious as their lives. His religion had removed Jacopone far from the successful lawyer he once was, versed in the rhetoric and dialectic of his day.

The Church, which for several years of his lifetime shut its doors to Jacopone, made him afterwards *Beato*—that is, conferred on him the first

degree of sainthood. From that he has never been promoted, but he has at least the privilege of lying with five of the city's *bona-fide* saints in the crypt of S. Fortunato, and he is, perhaps, the best remembered of all that holy company.

CHAPTER IX

SPOLETO

Spoleto is an exquisite place for the tourist, chiefly because he finds there so few of his kind; for he has, infallibly, no greater enemy than his fellow. Nothing, in the eyes of tourists, cheapens a place like other tourists; and although all strangers who travel about Italy must be classed in that category, they have a resentful shrinking from it, so that every traveller, to his own satisfaction, knows some private and elusive distinction about himself that keeps him outside. It is a moral certainty that if twenty apparently similar foreigners meet together by chance, each one will see in the congregation not twenty tourists, but nineteen tourists and himself.

At bottom there is a grain of sadness in this apparent misanthropy, for at home it always seems just a little distinguished and adventurous to come abroad, and to find so many and such ordinary people sharing in the distinction and adventure depreciates them a little. Though sometimes, one fancies, it might be more distinguished, if not more adventurous, to stay at home—towards Easter,

that is, when the English and American tongues appear to be the vernacular in Florence and in Rome, and the death-like stillness of Assisi is broken by motor-horns.

Spoleto, even at this season, gathers only a small harvest ; not on account of its remoteness, for it is as easy of access as most places in Umbria, nor yet because it is miserable and desolate, for it is neither. The reason is more likely to be that it is a rather clean and rather practical place, not enwrapped in a moribund and antique air, nor consecrated in a ruinous present to lamenting the glories of a splendid past. It is, in fact, not much of a place for sentimentalists, and for somebody who has been undergoing a course of characteristic Umbrian cities it is ideal.

Spoleto is, of course, itself an Umbrian city, and one of the best ; but that air of independence and separateness, so insisted upon in the old days, has allowed it to keep a very individual character. Spello, Assisi, and Montefalco are all very different from each other, but Spoleto, in a more general way, is different from them all.

In the first place the surrounding country is different. The town lies like its neighbour cities on the edge of the Apennines that border the great Umbrian plain, but the hills that rise behind it are not bare and grey, but wooded, covered with

a dense growth of ilex, of which the surface never changes with the passing shadows of clouds, but remains always solid and dark and green. The town itself, spread on the flank of a low round hill, and rising to the square important mass of the fortress on the summit, has something altogether rectangular and sturdy in its composition—a certain air of swept and cared-for streets, and a population not exclusively occupied in loitering at corners. It has a tended, faintly municipal look, and the citizens do not, like the inert and unfortunate Eugubines and Assisans, tell you with a melancholy pride, "Ah, questa è una città morta, Signore," and so exact from you the reverence and expiatory alms owed to death. It is, in fact, easy to imagine it what it once was, a Roman *municipium*, high up in its own self-esteem and well thought of at the Capital, carrying on life complacently in the midst of green and orderly surroundings.

Rome owed a particular gratitude and affection to Spoleto, because the town proved most heroically in the Second Punic War the strength of the Italian Allies' devotion to the Capital. In 217 B.C., Hannibal, making for Rome after his tremendous victory by Lake Trasimene, decided to go south not directly, but along the Tiber valley, in order to win over the allies as he went, and leave Rome

stranded. But at Spoleto he received a check. The little city, standing firm in the midst of the general terror, calmly faced his attack, and by its great courage succeeded in thrusting him back. One of the gates of the inmost circle of walls, probably on the site of a Roman entrance, is still called the Porta d' Annibale or the Porta della Fuga, to commemorate that triumphant feat of arms.

If one looks for it low enough, a good deal of Rome still remains in the city. There is the whole floor of a Roman house, part of a Roman amphitheatre and the foundation of a Roman temple, all underground, and everywhere, above ground, among the oldest houses, are to be seen great blocks of travertine, such as the Romans used, built into the lowest courses of the walls, and bases of columns and occasional capitals and scraps of moulding incorporated haphazard into the general scheme of bricks and mortar. The single Roman remnant still standing, called grandiosely the Triumphal Arch of Drusus and Germanicus, is less imposing than it sounds, as modern buildings have enclosed it so as to leave practically nothing but the opening free, and the street level has risen so as to deprive it of half its height. It stands in the Via Brignone, that leads into the market-place, little enough like a triumphal arch in comparison

with Titus and Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum, and liable to be passed under unnoticed by such as have not an eye cocked warily on the look-out for antiquity.

Spoleto, after having suffered badly through taking the wrong side in the Marius and Sulla upheavals, was left to pursue a quiet and prosperous course for the rest of her Roman days. Later the site of the city was much appreciated by the barbarian invaders, and in 569 it was made the headquarters of the Langobard dukes, who two hundred years later transformed themselves into the Dukes of Spoleto, and bore that title in a proud and valiant succession for six centuries. Later, as a faithful part of the Papal States, Spoleto was implacable against the Emperors, and was violently reduced to submission by Frederick Barbarossa. She had her sufferings in the Guelf and Ghibelline Wars, and was finally, in 1354, brought again under the authority of the Church by Cardinal Albornoz, who took strong measures in Italy while the Pope dallied at Avignon, and built so many of the Umbrian fortresses to safeguard his acquisitions. The Rocca at Spoleto is his work, and not having been allowed to fall into decay, it still towers over the city, a very impressive and unromantic picture of a military stronghold. To the last of her independent days Spoleto held out for Rome, and it is

curious to read among the records of Italian cities who thirsted for liberty and unity, how Spoleto was added to the tale of the *città ridente* only after a heroic and bloody resistance.

To-day there are two centres of life in the city, one for those who climb the hill, and one for those who stay at the bottom. The civic dignities and the Cathedral are at the top, and most of the humdrum everyday business seems to be gathered into the Piazza Garibaldi, just inside the Porta Gregorio.

Spoleto, like Perugia, boasts a cattle-market, which necessitates a busy square outside the gates, for as all Italian cities still exact toll and customs for incoming foodstuffs and livestock, the market produce is naturally not brought in, but is driven up under the city wall and there clamorously disposed of. These markets are one of the most familiar sights of Umbrian cities, and always one of the most exciting and delightful. The glorious white cattle, with their huge smooth flanks and branching horns, and their air of quiet loftiness and remoteness from the restless scene, are the centre of the picture, but there is also minor livestock for sale—goats and chickens, and in spring a tragical plenty of young lambs, who come unhappily to market slung in bunches, feet uppermost, across the backs of donkeys, and harrow the

SPOLETO

tender-hearted with their cries. Something under two shillings apiece is what they fetch, so that they cannot expect much ceremony in transit. It is never any fun to be an animal in Italy, but to be a kid or a lamb or a chicken on market-day must be even less exhilarating than usual. For the donkeys, however, once they have brought in their loads, market-day is a partial holiday, and they serve by waiting by the stone bridge beside their brave blue and red carts, a little brown throng drooping under their heavy pack-saddles in all those wistful and appealing attitudes that donkeys know so well how to assume. Sometimes, for the sake of shade, they are tethered in the hard and barren bed of the river, but beyond that they are not taught to look for comfort. Casual stalls, displaying stuffs and coloured handkerchiefs, home-plaited straw hats and burnished beaten copper-ware—this last the perpetual invitation and despair of the tourist, who, short of carrying it as a handbag, can think of no way of conveying a splendid great beaker or a handsome cooking-pot to his home—are scattered among the cattle, and the sight of them, and their sale, either proposed or effected, visibly and audibly enliven the scene.

The bridge by the market-place, and the Ponte Ponziano a little higher up, are merely idle ornaments once the winter is passed, for they span

no water, but only a white and pebbly river bed that curves round two entire sides of the city without refreshing it with the slightest trickle of water.

On the far side of the town, a little way beyond each bridge, stands alone an ancient church, bearing witness to an old and commendable preference for worshipping in the midst of green fields. S. Salvatore, which goes by various names, now surprisingly raises its battered face from among the fearful cypress-and-marble trimness of the modern cemetery. It is a very early Christian church, built on the site of a Roman temple, and there are evidences of both Christian and Roman work in the three fine doors, and in the three unusual windows set deep in the façade. Inside a number of the splendid Roman columns that survived from the first building have been set up again and are still standing, some oddly crowned by ill-fitting capitals, and others half-buried in plaster. The whole interior, bare and whitewashed and undecorated, has a certain charm, compounded of the homeliness of its later materials and the stateliness of its earlier ones, now all reconciled to each other and harmonised by time.

S. Ponziano, among olive trees on the next mound, appears to be something in the nature of a private chapel, the property of the ram-

shackle families whose dwellings surround it, and situated in their farmyard. To inspect it, however, is not reckoned trespassing, unless it be by the pigeons, a very handsome and possessive blue brood who have converted the façade to their own uses, and, perched along the moulding and above the door, and nesting in every hole and cranny of the stones, perform assiduously and with soft voices the duties of a choir. From the outside it is a very beautiful old church, probably of the twelfth century, worn to a fine colour and decorated with mouldings and the usual pair of carved symbolic stone birds, headless now and a coveted perch for their live successors. One pushes the door gingerly, expecting to be enveloped and entangled in cobwebs or to unloose a flutter of bats, and finds, in accordance with the contrary principle of Italian churches by which the outside and the inside never tally, a swept and garnished interior, clean and whitewashed and up-to-date, and completely uninspiring.

There are half-a-dozen ways of climbing up to the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele and the chief square, and here, as in all hill-towns, it is merely a matter of choosing one's gradient. The main street, starting from the Piazza Garibaldi, and lined with shops most of its way, winds fairly prosaically up and in under Hannibal's gate. The Via dell' Anfiteatro

and the Via Ponzianina, beginning from the beautiful little bridge and the gate of that name, are steeper and more interesting and less sophisticated. There people do not sell the product of other folks' industry, but go forward directly with their own. The shops there belong to wheelwrights and carpenters, smiths and coopers and donkey-furnishers, and the trades are carried on along the fringe of the cobbled street. Children are pressed early into service, some being clapped under overalls as early as eight years old or thereabouts, but their lot should not arouse any protective thirst for legislation in the foreign breast, for they play and idle more than a little, as do their elders, who have an altogether rational attitude towards work and regard it as a means and not an end to existence. Climbing up past those busy families, it is rather easy to forget one's real objective, and dismiss the promised beauties of the Cathedral in the simple pleasure of discovering exactly how an iron hoop is bent upon a cask, or a heavy wooden saddle planed away to fit a donkey.

Above the Via dell' Anfiteatro the roads make no pretence at dignity, but relapse into cobbled stairways, half-overgrown with green, twisting between the old houses of rough grey stone, and beginning and leaving off again without much attention to plan. But even in these parts there

is a certain cleanness about Spoleto, and a hint of green trees pushing over walls, and not too many of those backwaters of unsavouriness and destitution that occur inevitably in Italian cities.

Half-way up the main road, opposite a neatly-planted green space, stands what the guide-books stolidly describe as the "ex-church" of S. Nicolà, with a fine Gothic doorway. It is "ex" because it is open to the sky, but judging by its shell it must have been once a fine building, and the fading remains of frescoes still spared by the weather point to some good decoration. Obedient to the same contradictory principle as S. Ponziano, S. Nicolà is rather neat and respectable outside, and inside a cobwebbed haven for ladders and ploughs.

The Corso Vittorio Emmanuele, reached at last, runs impressively wide and level for a few hundred yards, from the sealed and dreary church of S. Filippo to the Piazza where Victor Emanuel stands, a clean and uninspiring space covering the site of a Roman theatre. In Spoleto there is no united and characteristic group of the Cathedral, Palazzo Pubblico and House of the Podestà. The Cathedral stands in a Piazza by itself, the Palazzo Municipale is a modern building, and the chief magistrate evidently kept no state.

Above the Palazzo Pubblico, accessible through the arch of Drusus, is the *Mercato*, once the Roman

Forum, where is a rather more elegant repetition of the market outside the gate, held in pleasanter surroundings. Here they sell practically nothing but green-stuff, and the stones are verdantly covered with onions, lettuces, and all that undergrowth and miscellaneous shrubbery that in Italy passes for salad. And here, at the appointed time, are evident gigantic stacks of leaf artichokes which creep into season as a delicacy, but tend later to recur upon the plate with the remorseless pertinacity of rhubarb. At one end of the market, gushing forth a splendid torrent of water, is a great fountain, flanked by columns and pillars and surmounted by a blue clock-face, so that the whole looks rather like the front of a small church. The road from the fountain, climbing again, now runs past the Palazzo Municipale, a sedate and utilitarian building, adorned by a widely-informative sundial, and with its terrace planted exactly over the site of a Roman house whose floor has been laid bare among the foundations.

With the exception of a few half-columns nothing of the house is left standing, but it is none the less worth visiting for the sake of the mosaics of the floor. They are of the regulation domestic black and white, such as can be seen at Ostia and elsewhere, but of particularly good design and very well preserved. A mosaic pavement, with its

patterns changing to mark the boundaries of the different rooms, is very handy for elucidating the ground-plan of a Roman house, and it must in life have been the pleasantest stuff for a carpet—cool and yet resilient underfoot and most agreeable to the eye. A single scrap of wall-painting, in the hot and hideous red and yellow beloved of the Romans, militates as usual against the quiet taste of the floor. The house is said to have belonged to Vespasian's mother, who, in spite of her connection with imperial state, evidently did not yield to the prevailing megalomaniac fashion.

Opposite the Palazzo Municipale, the Via della Basilica leads into a characteristically Spoletan piece of the city. Here there shows, as it were, an undercurrent of Roman Basilica, in the shape of great blocks of travertine, over which rise the rough grey stone walls of a maze of old houses, interspersed with little cobbled haphazard streets, spanned by arches, and seeming to connect in the most rambling fashion imaginable the smallest possible number of houses. Here, too, a decent and surprising level of cleanliness is maintained; not to be compared, however, with the Piazza on the top of the hill, with its neat pathways, splendid roaring fountain, and general air of municipal attention and care. Here one can take a last urban airing before emerging into the true country, and

admire the splendid lines of the bare Umbrian hills on the left behind the black peak of the Cathedral's tower, or look upwards to the Rocca, now a prison, but approached by flowery paths, or over to the right, where the topmost city gate gives out upon the hillside. A tiny boulevard, thickly planted with trees, leads from the gate into the heart of that landscape that is the Spoletans' pride.

It is a view, at once magnificent and civilised, of the mighty aqueduct that spans the gorge of the Ticino, joining the city's own hill to Monte Luco, which rises beside it high and solid, and dark with ilex woods. It is strange how the bridge links up two different kinds of country, planting its first arch among the clear colours of the sandy red hillside blotted with light olives, and its last against a wall of dense and heavy green. On the far side, where the spring whose thin, clear waters are the burden of all those heavy arches, drops down the hillside, is a grey and splendid pile of a house with a tall broken tower, once the fortress that guarded the head of the bridge, but now reduced to the natural and humble status of a mill.

The "Ponte," as the people call it, discovered behind that quiet little city, seems amazingly massive and imposing. The brave engineering of the Romans was doubtless responsible for its plan in

THE MARKET, SPOLETO

the first place, and Theodolapius, the third Duke of Spoleto, is said to have constructed it in A.D. 604, but the arches have naturally suffered emendations and metamorphoses with the ages. It provides transit now for passengers as well as water, so that from the fortress of Spoleto to the green flank of Monte Luco is but a step.

Both in Roman and in Christian times the dark mountain was holy ground. The Roman gods dwelt by streams and in wooded places, and the hill was named first from the sacred grove (*lucus sacer*) that covered it. Centuries later it was the haunt not of Pagan but of Christian gods, the sites of whose dwellings are marked now by white villas standing out of the green. Like so many of the Umbrian hillsides, Monte Luco is, in spring, a paradise of wild flowers. Violets and periwinkles, scylla and grape-hyacinth and anemones come first, all in the dark blue colours of the Italian spring ; and later on an extravagant display of vivid cyclamen, with Judas trees, whose blossom repeats the cyclamen colour and throws it high into the air, and patches of orchids, purple and yellow, and great bushes of white heather, that rock their bells in an imperceptible breeze, and give out a faint warm scent. Everywhere on the hillside are lovely and fragrant walks—to be accomplished on the broad, impeccable road or on breathless zigzag pathways

that in winter roar with water—and innumerable views of the square-roofed city, circled by the pebbly dry moat of the Ticino bed, and the adjacent valley spanned by the great pinkish-grey mass of the bridge.

To climb the whole of Monte Luco is no great test of endurance, and the view from the top is almost out of proportion to the pains of ascent. There from a bare patch among the trees one sees from the other end that wide view that rolls away from under Perugia—the great green plain dotted with houses, the first ridge of the Apennines that rise out of it suddenly and without warning, and the villages below them and on their spurs, Trevi Foligno and Spello, Assisi, discernible with the aid of the imagination, and Perugia, visible only to the mind's eye and the hawk-like gaze of the writers of guide-books. Exactly opposite the lookout is a glorious hard pile of hills, with the sharp triangular contours of an iceberg, and behind these again fantastic peaks of snow. It is a view that recalls to mind what the true nature of Umbrian landscape is, and how much less beautiful, after all, is the wooded comfortableness of Monte Luco than the bare grey flanks of Monte Subasio or Monte Igino, covered sparsely with hillside grass and bushes, and lightened and darkened by the passing shadows of clouds.

The south side of the mountain, where the old church of S. Giuliano stands in a grass field, curiously English and vivid among the dusty evergreen of the ilexes, gives a view into the entirely different country that Monte Luco foreshadows. Here the Umbrian plain has definitely ended, and in a stretch which the Spoletans are oddly proud to liken to Switzerland, the hills are dented by little valleys covered with grass and oaks, so that if one walks in it the country seems green and friendly and glade-like, with patches of homely common-land, where cyclamen peeps out unnaturally from under the furze.

Just at the foot of Monte Luco, built up against the edge of the slope and standing in green fields of olives and wheat, is S. Pietro, the old Cathedral, robbed now of its titular dignity, but otherwise unimpaired. A wide country road runs out to it from the town side, and a fine ancient flight of steps and a narrow terrace lead fitly up to the lovely and simple old façade, with its yellow marbles and its weather-beaten green doors. A beautiful and domestic view lies out under this terrace, best in spring, when the unsurpassably vivid green of young wheat dominates all other hues, and proves man's hand an occasional blessing in the colour schemes of creation. Just below and in the distance olives temper the bright-

ness of the wheat, and on the left, on top of a low round hill, are the splendid dark cypresses that line the long wall of the Cappucini convent.

Near at hand the façade of S. Pietro is an entertainment and a delight. It is closely decorated with a series of reliefs, of which the subjects seem to be gathered with an equally moral purpose from Æsop and the Bible and the artist's imagination. There are the usual symbols of the Evangelists and immortal birds, and also lively representations of snakes and bulls, of a lion terrorising a woodcutter, a warrior and a griffin, of the fox feigning death and of a hooded wolf reading out of a book, as well as a very vivid and engaging "Death and Judgment of a Sinner," to whose unhappy bedside the triumphant fiends have brought hell materialised in the shape of a huge iron cauldron.

S. Pietro has been usurped as a Cathedral, but as a church it has not been discarded. Priests hold their classes and the people sometimes pray there, so that, though for the most part it is utterly still and quiet among the greenness, it has yet an air of being touched by the stream of life and none of the sadness of an abandoned monument. It is perhaps as well that it has been dispossessed, for the newer Cathedral is a building of a great beauty, and S. Pietro, in idleness, has a strong and tranquil

charm that could not be part of a much-frequented church.

South-east of S. Pietro, and buried deep in the country, is yet another church outside the walls. This is S. Paolo, of the pattern of venerable S. Ponziano, but of rather less beauty, and in better repair. From it, as from the Cathedral, a good road runs back into the city, where there is an ample choice of gates for entry ; for Spoleto, though easy of access, never seems to have been nervous about the danger of piercing her walls. The Porta Romana and the Porta Loreto lead back to the top of the city through long workaday streets enlivened by the sight of strings of donkeys and the sound of hammering on anvils and much shouted conversation, and the Porta S. Luca leads sedately in through a stretch of public gardens, very pleasantly in keeping with the city's tidy character, where the people may enjoy just as much of the air and the view as suits the Italian nature, which would not think of exploring either outside its walls.

From the Porta Loreto, a curious long arcade runs out to the Madonna di Loreto, built perhaps for sheltering pilgrims in more pious days, but now a convenient place for tethering beasts. Of these there are always plenty in the neighbourhood, for just outside the gates are two depôts for shoeing

cattle—not smithies, but a species of rough swinging stocks, into which the great white beasts are fixed with no ceremony and with much skill and despatch. The shoeing is an interesting process, but just a little painful to the English mind, which is apt to give consideration not only to an animal's person, but also in some degree to his private feelings. The stocks are erections consisting of two great parallel bars of wood, fixed at a height of about six feet from the ground, joined near the bottom by thinner bars and with an upright post between them in front. The victim is led between the horizontal bars, and lashed by his horns firmly to the upright; then, by means of two strong chains passed under his body he is jacked up off the ground, so that his feet are just dangling. His legs can then be bent back at the knees and tied securely to low cross-pieces of wood, so that with great convenience to the smith, and without too much discomfort but with a painful measure of indignity to so heavy and big a beast, the shoeing can go forward.

I remember once, outside this Porta Loreto, having brought home to me, yet again, the necessity for the foreigner to hold his tongue when observing native customs, and to refrain from offering hints on the superior way things are managed in his country. I was standing, as I

thought unnoticed and inoffensive, near the scene of operations, where a little group of customers had gathered round the three men who were busy paring the victims' hooves and hammering on his shoes. They were all exchanging the customary jokes and conversation, when the chief smith suddenly interrupted himself in his work and shouted across to me,

"They do this differently in your country, don't they?" and when I replied in a surprised affirmative, he turned to his audience and said with a solemn and puzzled air;

"Yes, there they have silk cushions for their beasts."

A general guffaw followed, and I gathered that I was being made to suffer for the zeal of one of those unofficial outposts of the N.S.P.C.A. who fling themselves so unsparingly into any breach between an Italian and the beasts he owns.

Artificially reserved till last, but actually explored eagerly among the first beauties of Spoleto, is the Cathedral, which has dispossessed S. Pietro, but has little enough the air of an upstart or an interloper. It seems indeed as mellow as any building need be, and owns an extraordinary lovableness and charm. Like the Cathedral at Orvieto, it stands not in the centre of the city, but

at the edge, a little retired, and it has that supreme good fortune for a building of being beautifully situated and approached. It fills the broad end of a long wedge-shaped *piazza* which tapers away at the far end into a wide uneven path. A miscellaneous collection of old houses, among which are the remains of a very modest House of the Podestà, lines the two long sides of the triangle, of which the floor is roughly cobbled and overgrown with grass. Except for the noise of a carpenter's plane and the occasional voices of children the Piazza is utterly quiet. No traffic ever seems to penetrate there —not even a *carrozza* with a party of tourists—to disturb the medieval peace.

The façade of the Cathedral, in its upper half at least, is rather reminiscent of S. Rufino at Assisi, and has that same brown and exquisitely mellow colour, only here there is decoration in the shape of an old Byzantine mosaic, well in harmony with the rest, and a splendid five-arched portico like that outside S. Gregorio at the bottom of the hill, of a pattern often seen in Roman churches, but seldom in Umbria. A space in the portico which might have been devoted to a sixth arch is split up to form two outside pulpits, one of which flanks each end. It is not made clear whether they were built in duplicate for the sake of symmetry or in a broad-minded attempt to give two shades of

PORTA S. PIETRO, SPOLETO

opinion a simultaneous fair hearing, but they are at least a pleasant piece of decoration. The very strong and solid campanile, composed for three parts of its height of blocks of travertine, has an air of having once been a fortified tower, but now, at any rate, it decently declares itself for the church by the agency of a chime of bells. The fine main door, outlined with beautiful tracery, is of the square Roman pattern, and inside the porch on the left are some interesting fragments of carvings and old reliefs.

The interior of the Cathedral is just what, after experience, one learns to expect for provincial churches—that is, something altogether less coherent and interesting than the outside, with a few independent beauties which have to be sought among a waste of gilt and stucco, and separately enjoyed. There is here, however, in harmony with the exterior, a very beautiful old floor made of tiles of coloured marbles, patterned in red and white lozenges in the aisles, and with tiny and many-coloured pieces interwoven in the nave to give the appearance of a rough and early version of Cosmati work. The art treasure of the Cathedral is the great fresco of the apse, begun by Fra Filippo Lippi and finished by his pupil Fra Diamante after his death. The trace of a hand other than Filippo Lippi's is not disguised, but the

fresco is none the less a very beautiful and precious thing, and it is a delight to be confronted with the strong and unmistakable Florentine types and manner after a course of the feebler and more sentimental Umbrian pictures. The scenes depicted are the Annunciation, the Death of the Virgin and the Birth of Christ, and there is about them a certain largeness and a cool sea-blue and green colour and that air of flatness and restfulness that is proper to wall-paintings and is a pleasing quality in any work of art.

Filippo Lippi is buried in the Cathedral, very near his last work, for he died while he was in the middle of it in 1469, and the Spoletans, with a small town's characteristic jealousy of precious relics, refused even at the pleading of Lorenzo dei Medici to let his body be taken home. The Magnificent, however, handsomely raised a memorial to him, and directed his court poet Politian to write a fitting epitaph ; so that now, a long way from Prato and from Florence where he lived and worked, the genial, wise and most un-monklike head of the old painter looks out from a beautiful white and gold tomb, above the Latin verses that record how he gave life to his colours with cunning fingers, and nature, amazed, declared his work was equal to her own.

* * * * *

An unnamed god or goddess—Pan perhaps, or possibly Diana—in Roman times haunted Monte Luco on the south side of Spoleto, and on the north, close by the tiny village of Campello at the foot of the Apennines, was the shrine of the river god Clitumnus, beside his stream. To-day there is no trace of faun or huntress in the ilex woods, other than what one might attribute imaginatively to any green or once-holy places, but a vestige of the god still lingers near the river, and a stream of pilgrims, mostly modern, it is true, and accompanied by motor-cars, but curious, in the way of all pilgrims, and a few, perhaps devout, still keeps alive the echo of his cult. Though they come to-day not to worship Clitumnus, but rather to think a confused prayer for Pliny, Byron, Carducci, and perhaps even Longfellow, and the spirit of poetry that infused them all to write about the place, and the place itself that caused that spirit to stir. It is Carducci more than the rest that brings them, for Clitumnus inspired him to something imperishable —to that Sapphic ode, *Alle Fonti di Clitunno*, in which he pictured the place as the centre and heart of Umbria, and invoked the thousand ghosts—Umbrian, Etruscan, Roman, and Christian—who in turn had been native to the place and dispossessed.

Like almost all places known in spirit before

they are familiar in substance, the Fountains of Clitumnus turn out different from what one expects to see. Those winged verses of Carducci suggest a turbulent landscape, but in actual fact they describe what must be one of the quietest spots on earth. At Campello one steps out of the train eagerly, expecting to come at once upon a path leading to a grotto or some rocky pool at the base of mountains fed by an adventurous torrent; instead, a stray railwayman or peasant points to a dusty and prosaic road running towards the Apennines, and bids you steer for a pointed clump of cypresses, standing in the flat emptiness of the plain, a mile away, at the foot of the mountains.

It is likely to be a hot and difficult little walk, and when one draws abreast at last of the cypresses it is with a quaint feeling of disappointment, for the fountains of Clitumnus seem at first glance strangely like a bit of flooded English meadow land, or a piece of ornamental water in an English park, with a spring making channels through short tended grass, and an unruffled pool brushed by willows. There is a white cottage beside them, and a custodian who does not for once require money but only the sight of a written permission, and once inside you are free to do as you please and surrender yourself to the spirit of the place if you can find it.

Strangely enough, in spite of the presence of a hideous and much-bepencilled monument in marble to Carducci and a hint of withered orange-peel in the grass, a spirit *is* abroad and grows gradually more potent, especially if one stays there through a hot and drowsy midday, lying, like Horace, with one's head towards the fountain, and with the mind free and open for the procession of the past. Then the scene, which seems so ordinary and so everyday from the English point of view, becomes, from the Italian angle, strange and even exotic. The willows and the turf have no place in the familiar grey-green and misty hues of the Apennines and among the wheat and olives of the plain. They begin to partake of mystery, together with the scintillating sapphire-and-black dragonflies trying their first flight above the water, and the spring itself, bubbling up clearly and quietly, as its kind does all over the world, like a continuous emanation of magic from the earth. Now Carducci's picture suddenly becomes real, with its cloudy and immemorial mountains encircling the green home of the god, and the generations that succeeded each other there in worship of the perpetual spring.

> " Oscure intanto fumano le nubi
> Su l' Apennino ; grande, austera, verde,
> Da le montagne digradanti in cerchio
> l' Umbria guarda.

"Salve, Umbria verde! e tu del puro fonte
Nume Clitunno! Sento in cuor l'antica
Patria e aleggiarmi sull'accesa fronte
Gl'itali dii."

At the voice of the poet the old peoples return and possess the place; first the unnamed planters of the willows and poplars, then the Umbrians, overcome in turn by Etruria, and then Rome, who routed the "punic fury" so near by at Spoleto.

"Deh, come rise d'alma luce il sole
per questo chiostro dei bei monti, quando
urlanti vide e ruinanti in fuga
l'alta Spoleto

"i Mauri immani e i numidi cavalli
con mischia oscena, e sovra loro nembi
di ferro, flutto di olio ardenti, e canti
della vittoria."

Then the Roman god—in whose precinct nymphs and dryads danced by moonlight and by sunlight, when the shallow water shone as it does to-day with a curious glass-green light round the little islands of grass—was dispossessed in turn by the God of Galilee, in whose name the nymphs were routed and desolation spread over the fields as a promise of heaven.

"E sovra i campi dell'lavoro umano
Sonanti, e i clivi memori d'impero
Fece deserto, e il deserto disse
Regno di dio."

And so on till to-day, when a mile away from the unchanged shrine curls the white smoke of the train.

One could, of course, in any inch of Umbria, as well as here, ponder on history and the past, and yet infallibly one comes to remember it at the point where the men who made it left the traces of their contact with the earth. This is the human secret at the base of all sentimental pilgrimages, which in themselves have little enough reward. There is, however, about this one a certain tranquil charm for the eyes and a feeling of complete solitariness and abstraction from the world that is in itself a pleasure.

There is also another object of beauty in the excursion—which is a little temple, a mile away along the Via Flaminia, standing alone above the clear river that flows away from the Springs. Here was the actual shrine of the god, so charmingly described by Pliny, and here it was rebuilt into the tiny columned temple that still stands, like a summer-house in stone, on the high bank. Here, more than anywhere, the usurpation of Christianity seems sad and ill-accomplished, and under the cross, which in the name of Galilee banished the river-god from his natural home, nothing but emptiness seems to reign.

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